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# THE SISTERS LAWLESS.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROSA NOEL."

"For in every breast that liveth  
Is that strange mysterious door ;—  
The forsaken and betangled,  
Ivy-gnarl'd and weed-bejangled.  
Dusty, rusty, and forgotten." . . .

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON :  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON.

1874.

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# THE SISTERS LAWLESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MILL.

“The sleeping pool above the dam,  
The pool beneath it never still;  
The meal sacks on the whitened floor,  
The dark round of the dripping wheel.”

**H**OW inviting sounded the clack of the mill half a stone's throw away! How long since Doll had peeped into it. It seemed a lifetime ago—not one small month. The door, open, yet with its solid wooden barrier, or half-door, over which she was tall enough to lean, yet which prevented the intrusion of wandering four-footed animals and very

small children ; how familiar the door looked, but how unutterably strange, seen after those weeks of vague, though frightful sensations !

She could not resist stealing out, and over the causeway, with uncertain steps ; and, with self-applause, gained the mill door, and, leaning heavily on the wooden barrier, looked in.

The meal was still sliding down the trough, as if it had never for one instant ceased doing so since she saw it last.

The shovel stood slanting at exactly the same angle that it used to do, in the heap already fallen. There was the same pure smell of running water, and floating particles of grain. One of the two mill cats, which she had left a half kitten, came sidling towards her, a full-grown cat, looking ghostly with its thorough coating of flour, and with its lambent eyes' glaring from out its powdered face.

" Kitty, Kitty," said Doll, " you haven't been pounded on the stones, and been so sick that you were like to die, have you ?"

The miller's lad, who was coming down the ladder, upon hearing her voice, came towards her. He too was as elaborately powdered as any French marquis of the ancien régime, and his blue mischievous eyes looked very deeply blue, and his rustic cheeks very deeply rosy in their white setting.

"About agen, ain't you?" he made greeting to Doll; "you've been awful ill, ain't you?"

"I have been poorly," said Doll, sheepishly.

"Poorly!" repeated the boy, with a grin. "I should think so. Doctor a-comin' every day; miss from the park a-comin' every day; young squire a-comin' atween times like. And James's wife, she a-comin', too, as many evenin's as there is days in the week. But where's the young lady wot run over yer? I ain't seen her a-comin'; no, not onct."

Doll's face became scarlet. "I don't know where she is, and I don't want to know," she answered, passionately. "But



I love her sister," she added, in quite another tone.

"I dare say you do," replied he of the mill waggishly. "She's brought you things enough in her kerridge—baskets full."

"She's so kind," returned Doll quickly; "that's why I love her; not because of the things—though they are very nice. You never tasted anything half so nice, I don't b'leeve, as some of the things she's brought me lately. And she's given me books with pictures, and a work-box to sew out of, and a pretty bottle full of something white that makes me feel as if I had my head under water when I smell of it. I'm tired. May I come in and sit down on them bags?"

"Ye-es"—giving value to his permission by the hesitation with which it was pronounced. "Come on;"—and he unbolted the half-door; and Doll, entering, sank down upon a heap of empty meal-bags, with the abandon of physical weakness.

The boy was lord of the mill that morn-

ing ; his master being represented by him and an old soup-plate-shaped felt hat hanging on the wall up in the little room at the top of the first ladder.

“ Phew ! how they must have hurt ! ” said he, seating himself on the edge of the flour-bin, and, dipping in his hand, extracting a handful, with which he lazily, yet carefully, besprinkled a large cat that had joined the party.

“ What must have hurt ? ” asked Doll.

“ Why, the young lady’s horse’s hoofs, to be sure. My ! them iron shoes ! ”

“ Of course they did,” returned Doll, with a shudder at the recollection, yet gratified to feel herself a topic of conversation. “ They seemed to roar in my ears, too, and so did the stones. I thought I was dead, and going to heaven by machinery, ’cause I heard noises just like what the mill is making now, only louder. Oh, how I should like to see the great wheel ! Will you gi’e me a look at it ? Do, now ! ”

The boy seemed to lose himself in contemplation for a few seconds : then he said,

with tolerable alacrity, "All right; come on. I say, you haven't any o' them good things what the lady as you love gi'es yer with yer, have yer?"

"Not *about* me, exactly," answered Doll, temporizingly, "but yonder I have. If you'll show me the wheel, and come back with me arterwards, I'll give you some—and the box, too."

"Oh, I'll show yer the wheel. I only wanted to know, yer know." This spoken as Jesuitically as it is given to a rustic aged thirteen to speak.

He got upon his feet.

"Gi'e me your hand," said Doll; "I didn't know my knees was so weak; I can't get up."

The boy gave her chivalrously a brown, floury hand; and therewith she assisted herself to rise, and followed him with a heart palpitating strongly—partly from weakness, partly from anticipation—to the back of the mill, where the rush and whirr were increased tenfold.

The boy eyed a little door, with a key-hole, a button, and a rough handle.



Was it here? Would it whirl out into her face, splashing water upon her? The wheel had always seemed to her a thing more alive than dead—a concealed monster, a sight of which she had hankered after for years, without ever daring to ask to see it; for the miller was a dark and formidable man, no more to be accosted than the grim old squire.

Now that her wish was about to be gratified, she hung back at a timid distance, listening to the mysterious dull thrashing of the hidden water, and the muffled drip, drip, and the heavy jarring thud, thud.

The boy took a key from his pocket with a flourish, and opened the door suddenly. What a rush of watery noise, and gush of watery, woody, mossy smell greeted her.

“It won’t bite,” he said, looking at her with a derisive laugh. “My stars! I know this wheel as well as I do them cats. Ain’t you goin’ to look at it arter I taken all the trouble to show it to you?”

At this behest Doll stepped forward, and taking care to shelter herself a little behind

him, looked earnestly in at the broad blades which the rushing water beat so angrily. What cascades poured off them ! how dark, and soaked, and shining they were ! What a new, strange, effervescing sound seemed to come up, as of millions of broken foam-bells !

“ It smells as I thought it would,” she said, after a moment—“ brooky, you know, watery, and such like. But I thought it would be bigger, after all.”

“ It’s big enough to grind the grist,” retorted the boy, with some choler.

“ Oh, I know it is ! But I thought it would be bigger. Wait ; I want to see it go round some more before you shut the door. It is as big as mill-wheels mostly are, isn’t it ?”

“ A’ course it is. What ’ud be the good of having ’em bigger, so long as the grist gets ground all right.”

“ Ay,” said Doll, “ you’re right. “ Wouldn’t it be bad to be put in there, eh ? When Mr. Mavor scolds you very hard, ain’t you afraid that he might catch you up, and shut

you in there quick ? Where would you be then, eh ?”

The answer of the boy's shrill treble was drowned by a bass laugh close at hand, and by a stentorian voice, not owned by the possessor of the laugh, which said,

“ Hi, hi ! you Bill there ! Minding the mill, are you ? So are the cats ; so's my old hat ; so's the picture of the Sultan of Turkey up against the wall in the office ; and all doing it about equal, I'll bet my dog !”

Doll and the lad wheeled round, and stepped back, Doll, notwithstanding her weakness, involuntarily taking the attitude of a modified young Amazon.

Close to her stood two men and a bull-terrier, whose entry into the mill had been drowned by the noise of the wheel. Doll's large brown eyes wandered over them, and took in that one of the men was the miller, Mavor, whose face was perfectly familiar to her. The face of the other seemed to be also familiar to her ; but this, it struck her at once, was because of its resemblance

to Mr. Mavor—a similarity only natural, since the two were brothers. Mavor had gone off in his tax-cart to the station three hours ago, and a brother, who for years had been absent in France, was the cause. They had been dining en famille, and had now come to the mill, with their pipes. Here stood the brother, in his thin French boots, with his gaudy neck-tie, his stippled chin, his horsehair moustache, for which cosmetique did its best, his indescribable air of having been born one thing and shaped by foreign surroundings into another.

His laugh was the resonant and defined “ha ha!” that will sound above (as it did) even the loud clack of a revolving mill-wheel. And as he threw back his head, his large, yellow, palpitating throat reminded Doll instantly of a frog turned over on its back. His mouth opening in a square, as it sent forth its notes of amusement, completed the picture.

“She as’t me to show her the wheel, sir,” said Adam’s imitative descendant, pointing at Doll.



Doll, in her fresh, pretty print dress, her face transparent skinned and blue veined from her recent illness, her slender figure, seemed less a rural child to be awed by harsh words, than a fragile girl to be reassured by mild utterances.

“The wheel!” said Mavor’s brother, ceasing to laugh, and adjusting his large gold horse-shoe pin. “I was but a lad when I saw it last.” He spoke in a not unpleasant voice, and with just so much of a foreign intonation as would naturally be acquired by a man who had lived half of his life out of his own country. “And did you show, hein?”

“Yes,” said Doll, “he did. Now I’m going.”

“You’re sound again, are you?” asked the miller, detaining her.

“Yes, I’m well. May I come back again just for a minute, to give Bill something as I said I would?”

“Bribery and corruption,” said the brother, turning to the miller. “Show me. I give you—do you see?”

"Yes, I see," returned the miller; "but she might have got off. No,"—to Doll—"William must wait till his day's work is done; then he can go and get whatever it is for himself."

"But no," struck in his brother, "let her return."

"Well, come then," said the miller, laconically.

Doll, to whom anything was preferable to the loneliness of the cottage, looked gratefully at the brother, and then started off, presently returning with a gaily-painted box containing chocolate squares, that Clemence had given her, the doctor approving of chocolate, both as a neurotic and as nourishment.

"I can't give you all," she said to William, bluntly, as usual; "but I'll give you half, and you shall keep the box."

"And the other half?" asked the newly-arrived Mavor, with some amusement.

"I'll eat it. May I stay here while I do?"

“Why do you want to stay?” asked the miller.

“’Cause it’s lonesome there,”—pointing at the cottage—“and I like this mill; I like seeing the flour pour down; and I like the tramp of the wheels. And the cats and Bill are so funny—all mealy.”

“Stay for a while then, if you choose; but be off with you before very long. Come, Boniface, into the office.”

The brothers climbed the ladder and disappeared. Doll and the boy, seating themselves on the flour-sacks, began eating. Doll was always hungry now, at this stage of her convalescence, and nothing, at any time of the day, came amiss to her.

“An altogether pretty girl,” said Boniface Mavor, smoking, and turning over his brother’s books of accounts.

The miller grunted, and thereupon told the tale of Doll’s accident, and the care that had subsequently been lavished upon her.

“Queer that it should have been a horse that hurt her,” he said. “She’s as fond as you please of horses. I found her kissing

the star on Bess's forehead—that was Bess that brought you from the train, you know—one day when she was tied out here. And she spends half her time in the fields along with the horses that are out at pasture. She has a taming way with her that you ought to see, you know. She's in her element in a field full of horses and colts. I've seen her riding bare-back a dozen times and more. She was born horsey, that you may swear."

He spoke as if his words must be of special interest to his brother. And Boniface, stroking his stippled chin, said, "Tiens!" weighting the interjection with meaning, and continuing to rub his fore-finger up and down his chin as if he was grating a nutmeg.

"Her eyes, her complexion, her smile, her fine straight figure, her poses," he said, checking off each recommendation on his fingers. "My heaven! but that she suits me well."

"Do you mean anything particular by that?" inquired the miller.



Boniface drew his chair nearer to his brother's. Apparently he did mean something special; for, in confidential tones and with well-acquired gestures, he talked for a quarter of an hour steadily, his brother nodding from time to time to express concentrated attention, and puffing wreaths of smoke out of the open window. How alike, yet how subtly different, were the two dark profiles!

Boniface, with the uplifted eyebrows, the close-shaven cheeks and chin, the teeth yellowed by much cigarette-smoking, the eyeballs yellowed by much coffee-drinking—all speaking of his French acclimatization—naturalization: the miller, bearded, tinted on both cheeks with the red bronze tint of a russet apple, with level phlegmatic eyebrows, very white teeth, and utterly untinged eyeballs, slow and chary of speech, and with no emphasis of tone or gesture.

He listened to his brother with an interest which was far from being sympathetic, although it was keen. Once he

moved his foot as though half meditating a protest. Once he withdrew his pipe quickly from his lips, as though ripe for a dissuasive interruption; but Boniface's eager flow of words seemed to sweep these callow impulses away, and the phlegmatic miller sat mute, and the impulses came not again.

Boniface having concluded his monologue, the brothers rose to go down the ladder with mutual tacit consent. They laid their pipes away, opened the door, and went down. As his eyes came below the level of the flooring; Boniface saw that Doll was still there seated on the sacks, with William beside her. The remains of William's half of the chocolate were in the box; Doll's—which had been carefully counted out—were in the cover. Both children had evidently eaten to repletion, but were eying the dark squares with a certain contempt of self and of each other.

"Can't you eat no more?" said Bill, in the tone of one who would imply, "I thought your capacities greater."

“ My *mouth* wants more,” answered Doll.

“ Well, and then ?” observed Boniface, stepping up to her.

“ But I don’t think any of the rest of me does,” finished Doll modestly, with a blush.

“ I have a piebald pony that would eat the rest for you like *électricité*,” said Boniface.

“ Have you ?” returned Doll, feeling her key-note struck.

“ Yes, yes ; off a plate too, and with a cocked-hat on. A won—der—ful pony ! Commits suicide quite by himself, stretches himself steef, closes his eyes, and remains until the word of command. He takes the pistol in his teeth ; he places it on a stand, pointing towards his brain ; he draws the string round in front, pulls with his teeth—bang !—off goes the pistol, and our pony falls dead, as I have just come to say.”

“ What a clever pony !” said Doll, with admiration. “ I should like to see him. Have you got him here with you ?”

"No," answered Boniface, "I haf not. And I haf also a horse, so clever that I believe he knows he is a horse; I am not sure that he is not clever enough to haf an inkling of what I am going to do for him."

"And what *are* you going to do for him?" asked Doll, with a curiosity that would not be bridled.

Boniface winked by way of reply. A wink with so much point in it, that Doll reddened, and felt devoured with curiosity to know the intended career of the clever horse.

"You like horses, eh?" inquired Boniface.

"Oh, I do!" answered Doll, with enthusiasm; "I love their soft noses, and their nice slender legs, and their neighings and caperings; I love to feel them moving under me, even if it's only a canter round the field. They are so smooth to touch, so strong, so fast. What are you going to do with that clever horse you just spoke about?"

Boniface did not wink at her now; he



refrained from making even that ocular reply.

Bill went clattering up the ladder, having emptied Doll's share of the chocolate on to the bag beside her, fitted the cover on the box, and hidden it carefully away.

The miller stood with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes on the ground.

"What should you say of a little girl not so old as you, who would lie down with her head between a horse's two hind hoofs!" inquired Boniface Mavor, with an air of pre-supposing that she would say something very complimentary indeed.

"I should say that she wasn't afraid the horse would kick her," answered Doll, without hesitation.

The miller burst into a laugh, jingling the keys and small silver in his pockets as he did so.

Said Boniface, "Then you would not be afraid to do as this little girl did?"

"Not if me and the horse were great friends together. Where is that girl? I should like to see her."

Boniface, taking a Palais Royal cigarette-case of artistic design from his pocket, produced from it a photograph, which he handed to Doll.

“Do you find her pretty?” he said.

Doll knitted her brows, and stared intently at “her.”

“No; she looks like a dead fish,” answered she, giving it back to him.

“That is not a pretty way to speak,” said Boniface, seeing, for the first time, a child who mated shyness with fearlessness; and hardly knowing how to deal with her.

“But I thought so,” answered Doll, looking away from him, and reddening very much.

“She is dead—poor Zoraïde is dead!” exclaimed Boniface, after the fashion of a heavy father, and shaking his head mournfully, as he restored the photograph to the cigarette-case, with a deep sigh.

“So was I—all but—the other day,” said Doll. “And was she the girl what put her head atween the horse’s hind feet?”

“She was the one,” returned Boniface,

with a mingling of genuine and stage regret in his voice. "She is now in the sky."

Doll looked up impulsively into the empyrean.

In "Hiawatha" it is said that a gentle savage threw his grandmother into the moon—

"Right into the moon he threw her."

"Right into the sky he kicked her," perhaps floated through Doll's rural brain, as a possible deed committed by Zoraïde's accomplished horse.

"The horse did not kill her?" said she, more as if she were asserting a fact than asking a question.

"No, no," rejoined Boniface; "ma foi no; she caught a cold, it fixed itself upon her lungs, she bled from them, and died."

"There are no horses in heaven," said Doll, carelessly; "Miss Lawless says there are not, or she thinks there ain't. *Zoraydy* will find time rather long, I'm afraid, with-

out any horse to put her head atween his hind feet. Did she love him?"

Boniface shrugged his shoulders. "For rewards she did sometimes feed him with bon-bons. When we scolded her, and she cried, I have seen her wipe her tears on his mane. I have heard her say to him, 'Que tu es gentil, mon bébé,' which means, 'Thou art pretty, my child.'"

"What a funny thing to say to a horse," said Doll, sotto voce.

"I have seen her patiently dancing with him when she was very tired, for fear that he should forget."

"*Dancing* with he—dancing with a horse!" broke in Doll, excitedly. "Oh dear!"

"Yes, for fear that he should forget, and be beaten. She wept to see him beaten. Yes, I think she loved him well. Little angel! I think that I can see her now—with her gold boots, her gold whip, her blue velvet robe garnished with gold horse-shoes—standing, one hand upon Zain's neck, waiting for the overture to 'La Reine de Saba' to conclude, to enter



with him the arena at a bound, and to be greeted with storms of applause, with smiles from the children, with flowers, with gracious looks from all ; for Zoraïde was tout ce qu'il y a de plus favori."

"What next?" said Doll, breathlessly. "What did they do then?"

"Ah, then came the performances. It was Zain to dance ; Zain to faire le beau ; Zain to poser en statue upon a pedestal, Zoraïde on his back ; Zain to keep time to music with his fore-foot ; Zain to seat himself like that cat there, and shake hands—all at Zoraïde's word of command. Zain to kneel while Zoraïde mounted him ; Zain to answer questions asked him by Zoraïde, with a nod or a shake of the head ; Zain to do six, ten, a dozen feats more that I have not time to tell—all for lee-tle Zoraïde ! Lee-tle fair-haired child, that I could lift with one hand ! And the music playing so sweet, and Zain's silver bells jingling, and the gold horse-shoes on Zoraïde's robe tinkling and shining all the time, and the crowd applauding—applaud-

ing Zain, so spirited yet so mild, so strong and yet so gentle, so proud yet so obedient ; Zain, the colour all over of a fresh-gathered chestnut, sleek, shining, with no spot or hair of white upon him, as his name says ; and leetle Zoraïde, with her fair, long curls, her face so mince, her hands, her small form so frêle, her leetle foot so slender, her poor leetle grasp that could not kill a humming-bird—she the master of strong Zain, with his muscular flanks, and his wild eye ; she to lay her child's head, with its curls like sunbeams, between those grinding hind-hoofs, black and shiny, and shod with iron ! Mon cœur ! but it was a spectacle of extreme sensation. Zoraïde et Zain, alone in the arena ; the child's gilded hair, with a black hoof that could kill her under it, and a black hoof that could crush her over it ; and Zoraïde, with no fear, only a smile that showed her little teeth. Hélas ! I would that she lived now !”

Doll did not speak. She sat there in the comfortless attitude of eager, self-forgetful attention, her pale pink lips parted, her eyes

upturned to meet the yellow-balled eyes of Boniface Mavor, with a look so intense that it would have *told* on a wild animal, or a lunatic. As Boniface paused, she slowly withdrew her glance, and fixed it on the smiling sky, where downy cloudlets, floating slowly, attached themselves gently to one another, or, as gently separating themselves, sailed away alone. If she had been Zoraïde, it seemed to her that she would have clung to life with that tenacity of purpose which doctors have said humanity has sometimes summoned—and with success—to keep the common foe at bay—keep him at bay, and rout him. It seemed to Doll that she would have clung to life, and to Zain, that marvellous horse, and to the gold boots and gold whip, the blue velvet gown and the horse-shoes, with a determination that should have confounded and turned from his design, the “Monarch of Might.” What pleasures, what glories to leave! The admiration, the smiles, the wonder of a crowd, the intense delight of having that four-footed thing, which, of all four-footed

things, she most adored—a creature whose neck, the Bible said, was clothed with thunder—obedient to her word, and servile to her hand. She must have been a feeble sort of mite, after all—this Zoraïde with the fair hair—or she would have clung more strongly to an existence so spiced with pleasure. She would have emerged from the very jaws of Death, as Doll herself had done, and gone back rejoicing to the horse with the wonderful name; to the arena (what was that?), to the blue velvet, the gold boots, and the welcoming smiles of the children. It seemed a fair life to Doll, who had not learnt yet—perhaps never would learn—that the fairness of a life consists, not in its pleasures light-heartedly enjoyed, but in its sufferings nobly endured.

“There is a coltie over yonder,” she said, with her customary abruptness, but with a softened look coming into her eyes as she spoke, “that I’d give anything to know if he’s alive. His poor front feet are long, and all rough and queer—like this.” (Doll thrust her foot out, and pulled the



toe of her boot back with one hand as far as it would go.) "Don't you think they might be cut off, and made to look like other horses' feet? To shoot him! Oh, I can't bear to think of it! He is so pretty; a deal prettier than the other colts in the field with him. Won't you go and look at him, and see if he could not be made like other colts?"

"I am not a vet.," said Boniface, smiling.

"I don't know what that is," answered Doll, disappointed. "The sun is beginning to sit on the tops of the trees in Elvaston Wood, and I must go. Good-afternoon to you, sir; and I shall not take the rest of the sweeties; Bill may have 'em all. I'm tired of 'em; I've eat so many."

Doll opened the door, and went out. Boniface watched her admiringly as she crossed the babbling water, and entered the old gate, which hung open on one hinge. Doll's dreams that night were a confusion of piebald ponies, blue velvet dresses, and gilt boots. Upon waking in the morning, she longed to see that yellow-

faced gentleman again, and he told more pleasant wonders of that unknown world from which he seemed to have come.

It was a very rainy day. The rain pouring in such steady earnest, that even Clemence, who was very brave about weather, did not venture out, and Doll had a very lonely day of it.

That evening, just as John began imbibing his nightly potation, Jack, from beneath the chair, gave an ominous-sounding growl, and John directly heard footsteps coming up to the door. A visitor was a rare occurrence ; but to-night he had one ; and it was Mr. Boniface Mavor.

The conversation between them had distinctive results, which is more than can be said of most conversations.

On coming into the kitchen the next morning, Doll was surprised to find that her father had not yet gone to his work, and that he was smoking——what ?——a cigar ? Yes, he was smoking a cigar. Doll held her breath.

“ Good-mornin’, Doll,” he said, nodding

to her with affability ; “ how do you find yourself feeling, eh ? ”

“ Better,” answered Doll, “ and hungry.”

“ You’re a-goin’ on for fourteen, ain’t yer, Doll ? ”

“ Yes, I am, father.”

“ This mornin’, when I come down, I see a money-spinner ; that’s good luck, ain’t it ? What do you think is a-goin’ to bring good luck to I, eh ? ”

“ The money-spinner,” answered Doll, without hesitation.

“ No,” said John, taking the cigar out of his mouth. “ *You’re* a-goin’ to bring me good luck ; you’re a-goin’ to be my money-spinner. You’re a-goin’ somewhere where you’ll never hear the thresh-threshin’ o’ the mill, nor yet the swash o’ the race.”

“ Am I ? ” interrupted Doll, in evident affright.

“ You’re a-goin’ somewhere where you’ll hear naught but the rollin’ o’ carriages, and the playin’ o’ bands o’ music.”

“ Away from you, dad ? ”

“ Away from I ? Yes. That’s what

gurrlls does what goes into service, ain't it? And you ain't goin' into service, nor anything nigh it; it's goin' to be jovial play to you; jovial play," repeated John, pleased with the words.

"What sort of play?" said Doll, coming tears making her voice tremble.

"When you're full strong and hearty agin, you're a-goin' somewhere where you won't be Doll no more; you'll have a fine strange name, and, for all folks 'll know about yer, you might a' come from the waters under the earth."

Doll leaned up against the wall, with trembling lips and eyes more full of wonder and curiosity now than dismay.

"Mind yer don't go blabbin' o' this what I'm goin' to tell yer!"

"No, dad."

"Not to miss, from the park, nor nobody!"

"No, father, no, no!"

"If yer does, I'll put yer out to service for scullery-maid, see if I doesn't."

"I won't!" exclaimed Doll, with em-



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phasis ; “ I won’t, indeed. Oh, tell me quick, dad, what it is.”

“ Mind, now, if you tells it, out you goes as scullery-maid.”

“ I’ve said I wouldn’t tell, and I won’t.”  
replied Doll.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN LONELY ABJECTNESS.

“There are still many sorrowful things in life,  
But the saddest of all is loving.”

“**I** WISH that you would look at me more when you talk to me,” said Henry North to Angela one day. “Don’t look to the right of me, to the left of me, over my head—anywhere rather than at me—at my face, I mean.”

“I dislike looking people in the eyes when I talk to them,” answered Angela.

They two were sitting at the foot of one of the urns on the stone step, while Adrian, Clemence, and Bertie sauntered near them amongst the shrubbery.

“I hate that little basket of yours, full of bagatelles,” Captain North went on. “You

are always arranging and re-arranging it, it seems to me. As for my friend Hicks, whom you were so awfully nice to last night at the Vicarage, I should like to break his head."

"When a man hates a man, he wants to break his head," said Angela; "when a woman hates a man, she wants to break his heart. That is a nice little simple demonstration of the difference between the two, is it not?"

"Come, I did not say that I hated Hicks."

Angela blushed, and looked angry with herself, but angrier with him.

"No, I know that you did not," she said, recovering herself, and speaking in the tone of utter indifference that she had maintained throughout the conversation, and that she now maintained throughout all conversations. Her voice was always perfectly clear and even. For, although our hearts may be broken, it would be absurd for our voices to be so, and lips must let laughs pass out like their neighbours', although the soul is sore hurt. Not that

Angela laughed much nowadays; a sort of listlessness and apathy had stolen over her. She must have been truly very wretched, for she never now thought of telling herself how unhappy she was: and when we no longer think of commiserating ourselves, then it seems that our misery has assumed an unromantic reality, and is suffering keen and deep.

The flush died away, and she leaned languidly back against the urn; the gray stone making a good background for her drooping shoulders, and fair, fine hair, and magnolia-blossom cheeks, and large, shallow, blue eyes. The red flowers massed above her head seemed to offer themselves as a contrast in colour to her pale loveliness.

Henry regarded her attentively.

"I think that the air here is too relaxing for you," he said, "after Canada. You should be taken to some seaside place on the eastern coast, where the air is bracing."

"Of course; right as usual, my learned brother. What I need is ozone. That is the word, is it not?" she said, in the same

tired voice, and leaning her head back against the urn. "The bracing air of some seaside place on the eastern coast will restore to me what I have lost in this warm, relaxing bit of England. Would you come and get ozone, too, Captain North?" She smiled slightly, and the coquettish dimples came about her mouth for an instant.

He half knelt on the steps below her, and his voice vibrated like a harp-string that is being touched by an unskilful hand, as he answered—

"Why, I would go to the Black Hole of Calcutta if I thought there was a chance of your being there."

"Or to the Cannibal Isles if you thought that there was a chance of your being made into a pie with me?" said Angela, with a laugh.

"Yes," he replied, his deep and tender voice putting to shame the high, metallic, unfeeling ring of hers.

Just then a bumble-bee, with that air of repletion and intoxication inseparable from bumble-bees, comes reeling through the hot



July air, taking a zig-zag course for Angela's face, apparently. Angela screams—she always does scream a little at bats, mice, wasps, bees, worms, and earwigs—and puts her hands over her eyes. There is a little scene in consequence. Henry routs his adversary with a pocket-handkerchief, and Angela uncovers her face.

“Now look at me and thank me,” he says, smiling.

She looks at him crossly enough.

“I hate bees,” she says, frowning at him; “and I am going in.”

“I could not help the bee coming.”

“You must have seen it——”

“Quarrelling?” said Adrian, coming up and interrupting them. “My dear Angela, how cross you look!”

“A bee nearly stung me, and I am going in.”

“Oh, don't; pray don't!” said Captain North, entreatingly; “it is so jolly out here.”

“Come; be sweet, and stay,” subjoined Adrian, laughing.

"I don't want to be sweet."

"You fulfil your own wishes, then, I am sure," said Adrian, not ill-naturedly, but in the teasing manner he had got to have towards her. She seemed such a vain, selfish, spoilt creature to him.

Angela heard him with indifference, and, catching up her work-basket, sauntered away. They accompanied her.

"Not so fast," said Adrian, "or we shall come upon Bertie and Clemence. I know, Angela, how you lose patience at seeing them together, and avoid them as a man does some one who he thinks wants to borrow money of him."

Angela made a little movement, such as would be made if a ring cut under a tight glove.

"I wish you would choose your expressions more carefully," was all she said.

"Clemence and Bertie are the most agreeable engaged people that I ever saw," remarked Adrian, "they disturb no one."

“Why should they?” asked Angela.  
“How absurd!”

“There is Aunt Maria making signs to you from the window, Angela; I think that she wants you.”

“I know what she means,” said Angela, indifferently, “she wants one of us—either Clemence or me I mean—to go for a drive with her; she feels shaky to-day; where is Clemence, A. F.?” (Angela had adopted this appellation for her cousin). “Go find her; she will go.”

“Poor Clemence! What, take her away from Bertie?”

“Why not?”

“But why do not you go?” asked Adrian, looking at her seriously.

“Because I go a-sketching every afternoon. One ought to cultivate a little talent, if one has it.”

At that moment a turn in the path brought them face to face with Clemence and Bertie.

“Aunt Maria wants you,” said Angela

to Clemence at once, in her cold unfriendly voice.

“Does she? Has she sent out for me?”

“No,” said Adrian, “she does not want *you* particularly; Angela would do as well. But Angela is going a-cultivating her talent for drawing, and you must go on cultivating your talent for unselfishness.”

“Oh, Adie,” said Clemence, “don’t tease her!” For Angela had turned away, and was walking rapidly towards the house. She always thus managed to avoid conversation and intercourse with both Clemence and Bertie, and, as was the case to-day, contrived that the avoidance should not be patent to others.

She walked up to her room and locked herself in. It was half-past three o’clock; that time of the day when, if the weather be hot—as it was then—the sun’s rays seem to come through a burning-glass. It had been tolerably cool down in the shrubbery, with little airs playing bo-peep through the laurels and laburnum alleys, and with shade wherever one walked.



But here, in Angela's room, which was a south-westerly one, the heat was *intense*. Angela let the venetians down with a clatter, but before turning away from the window, peeped through the slats.

"Still together," she whispered to herself; and then crossing the room, she flung herself down on her bed. Her delicate, crisp, muslin dress was crushed into a million creases, her carefully arranged hair was pressed into a crooked rough ball; her locket, with its raised monogram, was twisted smooth side out, and imprinted a scarlet A. A. L. in her throat. One slipper dropped off, and its little wooden heel hit the floor with a smart rap. The burning air of the room seemed to drag strong scents from out of the soap, and the slightly open drawers, and the Russia leather cases, and the bits of lace and ribbon tossed on the table. A fly buzzed and hummed in exhilaration round and round the room. What a peculiarly *hot* sound it was! Her aunt's maid, in the next room, moved to and fro with one



boot that creaked ever so little. What a hot sound that was, too ! If they had only both creaked frankly, but for *one* to creak in such a sly, stealthy manner ! Yet Angela lay quite still. It was not new to her, any of it.

Presently a sound reached her—

“ Like a child’s voice in sacred song,  
That trembling rises high and higher.”

It was Clemence singing.

Aunt Maria had not wanted any one to drive out with her ; she had beckoned to say that she herself did not feel well enough to go in the heat. Angela muffled her already burning face and head in the pillows, and the faint sweet notes were effectually shut out.

Henry North lingered long in the drawing-room, hoping every moment to see Angela steal in ; but no Angela came. Clemence was singing a song which Adrian had produced, somewhat to the astonishment of his family, for he did not sing in the least. It was an American song ; both words and air being written

by Americans. Adrian explained that it had been sung at the house of some Americans—acquaintances of his—in London. Sung by the daughter of the house; who, upon his admiring the words very much, had immediately rolled up the song, and presented it to him. She knew it by heart, notes and words, she said. Adrian reddened slightly, as he gave his little narration.

“What is the name of your American friends?” asked Clemence, with kindly interest.

“Smith,” replied Adrian, reddening still more.

Clemence did not join in the laugh given by Henry North and Bertie.

“Smith is as nice a name as any other name,” she said, silencing them. “We spent one summer at the Falls of Niagara,” she went on, “and we met a great many Americans there. Some I liked very, very much; I thought their rather gushing manners pleasant. And although they loved Louis Quinze heels, and four-button

gloves, and diamond ear-rings to distraction, it did not prevent their having very warm hearts and obliging dispositions. They were so kind to us, many of them ; and when with some people from Louisiana, I was really afraid to admire any of their pretty possessions, for they were sure to want to give them to me."

"Oh, you always have a good word to say for every one," said Henry.

"Then people should not be so agreeable, or so kind, or so clever, or so something or other, you see," answered Clemence, laughing, and turning away to sing the song for a second time.

It was a pretty song. The words ran thus :—

"In crimson flakes on the garden mould,  
Are the falling rose-leaves lying ;  
And the mystic wind, that harper old,  
Through my ravaged bower is sighing  
A low sad tune ;  
For beautiful June  
Is dying.

“ The whistle clear of the mother quail  
To the mead lark is replying,  
And airy tongues in wood and dale,  
Sweet, many-voiced are crying  
‘ Too soon, too soon  
Our beautiful June  
Is dying.’

“ With saddened note o’er the faded lawn,  
The barn-swallow low is flying,  
A youthful bloom from the land is gone,  
For the ‘ strawberry moon’ is dying,  
And the crickets croon  
That beautiful June  
Is dying.”

“ Is the American girl pretty, Adie ?”  
asked Clemence gently.

“ Really I cannot tell you,” he answered  
in a too indifferent tone.

“ Oh, come !” said Henry, “ that won’t  
do, you know.”

“ Yes, it will,” replied Adrian, and then  
Clemence began to sing again, and they  
were silent.

“ Will you say good-bye to your sister  
for me ?” said Captain North, rising to go  
at last, his patient waiting having gone un-  
rewarded. “ I am going up to town this



evening to spend the rest of my leave there—not from choice, believe me ; an old uncle of mine has just come home from the Mauritius with a constitution pretty well shattered, and I have a sort of summons to go to him.”

“ I, too, am going up to London this evening,” said Adrian ; “ we had better go by the same train.”

“ All right, 7.40 is mine ; see you at the station. Good-bye, Miss Lawless” (this to Aunt Maria), “ I hope to find you quite well again when I return, and to find the weather cooler ; I am sure it is the heat that you have been feeling. Good-bye, Miss Lawless” (to Clemence), “ don’t forget to say good-bye to your sister for me.”

“ Oh, no !” said Clemence, raising her liquid eyes to his, “ I shall not forget.”

There was a cadence of deep sadness in her voice. Interpreted it would have been found to mean that she was thankful to have a message to deliver to her sister ; she scarcely dared address her on her own account now. A terrible state of affairs,



and one that it was difficult to keep from being apparent to other eyes.

Then Henry North departed. He was like a man who had been unexpectedly caught in a quicksand ; struggle as he might now, his struggles seemed only to immerge him deeper. He saw all Angela's shortcomings very clearly, hence his struggles ; but they were bootless.

He met Adrian that evening at the station as agreed upon, and the two took their seats in a smoking-carriage. As the train hied up to London, they talked of nearly every subject under the stars, and smoked a good deal, thereby shortening the two hours and a half considerably. It was about ten o'clock when they arrived, and Henry said that as he should not think of disturbing his uncle that night, Adie had better go out with him, and do something to amuse himself.

“ I have an engagement,” said Adrian.

“ Why, I thought you looked rather smart for travelling,” remarked Henry.

“ I am going to some friends of mine—

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Americans," said Adrian ; " they don't mind about evening dress."

" Ah ! the Smiths," said Henry.

" Yes, exactly. I'll take you there with me if you like ; they are nice people ; they are glad to have men brought there."

" I should like to go very well," answered Henry.

This little conversation was taking place at the hotel where the shattered uncle was stopping, and where Henry naturally stopped too ; and presently the two young men were flying through the streets together in a hansom on their way to the Smiths'.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SMITHS OF PROVIDENCE.

**M**R. EUGENE SMITH, of Providence, Isle of Rhodes, had been shipped to China at an early age. Fortune had been beneficent, and the opium trade highly remunerative to him. Whole cargoes of tea which he bought in China at something like one and six a pound, obligingly sold for five shillings upon their arrival in America all the years that the war was going on. Ivory served his turn well, too. At one time carved chess-men were the men for him. He made quite a fortune out of them.

Mr. Smith had been one of those shambling, red-haired youths, who is shipped off

into the future by his friends with anything but cheerful auguries. There had been very dismal predictions made concerning his want of "smartness," and "go," and "faculty," which he had straightway non-fulfilled.

When premature middle age was beginning to creep upon him, Eugene Smith had returned home with an income that was of itself a good capital, and his fellow townspeople had said that inscrutable indeed were the ways and caprices of Fortune, which had singled out this man, whom they had predicted ill for, to do well for. And when Mr. Smith carried off Miss Van Schuyleyn, of New York—beauty, belle, and best of Knickerbockers—as his wife, it all seemed more inscrutable still. For did not everybody know that Smith's father was "perfect mud-pie"?

One child only came to cheer the sturdy late years of Eugene Smith—a daughter—an idol, one might as well call her, whose rose-leaves were never permitted to be crumpled,



and whose life was just next door to that of a princess of fairy tale.

When Miss Pussie Smith arrived at the mature age of sixteen, she discovered that "the other side" claimed her. Accordingly, the Smith family "came over," and remained. Their winters were spent in Paris; in the summer they travelled about like vagrant princes.

This summer they had taken a house in Mayfair for the season, at a mammoth price; and Miss Pussie had been presented at Court, and had gone to a Court ball, and was pursuing pleasure with that directness of aim, that earnestness, and wholeheartedness, which is peculiar to the American, in her pursuit of pleasure.

Miss Smith was always called Miss Pussie, by particular request; she disliked the name of Smith. Who does not—except the man who is in love with a Miss Smith?

When Henry and Adrian entered the Smiths' hall, Henry was at once struck by the motley crowd of servants. He had

time to notice an English butler in decorous black, a Chinaman in native dress, an old black servant clothed evidently according to his own fancy, an unmistakable French laquais with aiguilletes, and an English footman in blue seamed with red.

They were ushered into a room full of people, principally men, where a very young lady was apparently the hostess—at least, she was standing in an accessible place, bowing to people, and shaking hands with them—and it was to her that Adrian at once moved.

“Good evening, Miss Pussie; permit me to introduce to you Captain North, a friend of mine, whom I have ventured to bring with me this evening. I hope you will excuse our not being in evening dress; but we have just come up, and feared that it would make us too late if we waited to dress.”

“Oh, never mind about that! I’m ever so glad to see you. And very glad to see you too, Colonel North,” turning to Henry.

Miss Pussie was a slender girl, with that

willowy grace which is conspicuous in very many American girls—a supple beauty of motion that is delightful to watch. Miss Pussie had curling auburn hair; there were little tendrils on her neck and about her temples; she had a blush-rose skin, and her two tawny eyes were as laughing and happy as any child of earth's could well be.

“Where shall I find Mrs.—a—your mamma?” asked Adrian.

“Ma? Oh, ma's over there, somewhere; I'll take you both to her.”

Adrian gave her his arm, and she conducted him and Henry to a fair-haired lady, who still owned the ashes of a once glowing beauty.

Miss Pussie presented the stranger, and while he talked to the mother, Adrian began a gay and amusing conversation with the daughter.

It is needless to say that both mother and daughter were dressed in garments perfect in colour and design, for which they seemed fitted by nature. Mother and daughter were both voluble, and had only

the merest suspicion of a Yankee nasal intonation. They were both amusing; both talked somewhat slipshod English, which, however, as they went on, grew less and less noticeable.

Champagne and wine, altogether too good for such a diversified collection of mouths, were given at the charming supper which was served shortly before midnight; and after it, a little dance was got up, and Miss Pussie did duty for ten young ladies.

Adrian lingered until nearly every guest was gone, and Henry of course waited for him.

“Now, let us have a cup of nice hot coffee,” said Miss Pussie, as they were left actually alone together. He, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Miss Pussie and Adrian. Mr. Smith, with his red hair, alas! now bleached white, and his sanguine complexion yellowed and withered, was talking to Henry as if he had known him all his life; and his wife, taking part in the same conversation, by turns contradicted, or energetically coincided with her husband.



"This is the last of our Thursday evenings," said Pussie to Adrian; "next Wednesday we go to Trouville, and then back to Paris, which is our second home, you know. Not *real* home; nothing could seem like real home but the United States. Don't you think you shall come over to Paris this winter?"

"Perhaps I may be able," answered Adrian; "I am sure I should like nothing half so much as to come. And have you enjoyed your visit in London very much?"

"Oh, I have had a lovely time!" said Miss Pussie, earnestly. "English people that we knew in Paris have been very kind to us here; and I have been to a heap of balls, and whitebait-dinners, and water-parties, and all sorts of things. Pa must take this very house next year. I love it. Oh, but wait till you see our hotel in Paris! It's furnished by *me*. My taste I mean. And it's too sweet. Now, you won't think me conceited for saying that, will you, Mr. Lawless? It's so easy to have good taste in Paris; you're so guided, you know, by

things you see in the upholsterers' shops, and in the little books they bring you."

"I could not for one instant think you conceited, Miss Pussie; no doubt your hotel is most charming and artistic; I should like much to see it."

"Well, it will be your own fault, if you do not. And I have such a quantity of dear little dogs; we only have two pugs with us now; Chinese pugs; and you've no idea what a sensation Fo Chyng makes when he takes them for a walk in the morning. If you'll promise not to tell that I said anything so silly, I'll tell you that I had the pugs brought on purpose to match Fo Chyng. I don't like them as well as the other dogs; but they do look so nice in a string, led by Fo Chyng. Have you ever noticed them walking with Fo Chyng?"

"No," said Adrian; "where do they usually walk?"

"Oh, all about here, and in the park," answered Miss Pussie, with a comprehensive wave of the hand.

"I'll look out for them to-morrow morn-

ing in the park. By-the-by, do you ever go to the park in the morning?"

"Oh, every day of my life; regularly," answered Pussie, emphatically.

"Then perhaps I shall see you there, as well as the pugs," said Adrian, smiling.

"You're sure to see me, if you choose to see me. Tell me, Mr. Lawless, don't those beautiful cousins of yours ever come down to London?"

"They did not come this year, because they are still in mourning for their father—my uncle—who died more than a year ago. Probably, next year they will come up, and be presented. They are not beautiful, however; the younger one is very pretty, in her own way."

"And what is her own way?"

Adrian described her, after a fashion.

"And which one is it that is engaged to your brother?"

"The elder; she is a nice-looking girl, without being regularly handsome. She is the sort of girl to whom one would not mind confessing something not creditable

to one's self. She is a dear creature, Clemence. I am delighted to be going to have her for a sister-in-law. At one time I feared there was a chance of having the other one——” Adrian stopped short ; it seemed to him that he was growing wonderfully communicative to Miss Pussie, who was listening to him with the greatest attention.

“ Then you would not have liked to have the other—for a sister-in-law ? ”

“ Not at all,” he answered, briefly. “ Miss Pussie, you always have the prettiest orchids in your drawing-room.” This, of course, was merely to change the subject.

“ Oh yes,” she said, “ I get orchids. *Flowers are so common !* ”

Oh, Pussie, Pussie ! child of an advanced civilization, a gilded age, and a precocious country !

“ Oh, then, why not have a few mushrooms and truffles, and that Sèvres vase filled with some nice, uncommon dried herbs ? ”

“ Now you are making fun of me ! I'm afraid that was a stupid, silly thing to say,



about the flowers. They are very pretty ; and what should I do without artificial flowers for my bonnets, and ball dresses ; and of course they must have natural ones to copy." Pussie looked at her white dress, which was looped with pink silk roses, each rose having cost fifteen shillings. On her arms were bracelets—diamond daisies!—and the same simple—diamond—flowers were in her beautiful hair and at her breast.

"It was an odd speech of yours, Miss Pussie, that."

"It was a real silly one," said she, pouting at herself. "Beautiful flowers! I am sure neither of your beautiful cousins would have said it."

"Angela might——"

"Angela! Is that the name of the youngest one?" (Pussie was not at all particular about interrupting people.) "Angela Lawless; what a pretty name!" she added, enviously, thinking of her own disliked patronymic.

"She admires it herself rather," said

Adrian, coolly. "She twits me because I have such an ugly nickname fastened upon me."

"What is it?" asked Pussie, inquisitively.

"Oh! *she* always calls me 'A. F.' " answered he, successfully evading the question.

Pussie looked very much thwarted and vexed.

"My cousin Angela is awfully spoilt," he went on, mischievously. "Her father used to spoil her, and now her sister goes on spoiling her. It is a great pity, for it has made her very selfish."

"Why, *I* am a spoilt child! Everybody says I am," exclaimed Pussie, opening her eyes very wide, and looking at him with indignation.

"Of course you are; wait"—for Pussie was going to break in—"but there are different types of spoilt children, and you are the diametrically opposite type to my cousin. I am sure that you are not a bit selfish."

"Yes I am; deadly selfish. Ma and pa are in mortal terror of me."

Adrian looked at pa's face, upon which sat a broad smile, and at ma's juvenile head, with its frivolous little curls, its pink aigrette, and diamond star.

"Their 'mortal terror' does not seem to have told on them much," he replied, smiling.

"Dear old ma and pa," said Pussie, with a tender little laugh, and a softened tone in her penetrating American voice; "they are regular victims to *me*. I trot them about like old shoes. Oh!"—striking herself a smart rap with her fan—"how *angry* I am with Pussie when she makes use of one of those ugly expressions!"

"Are you? I could not have the heart to be," said Adrian, watching her.

Pussie looked down, and looked shy.

"If you had only come a little earlier, I would have introduced you to Miss Floy Fairfield, who considers herself the Clever Woman of the whole human family."

Adrian laughed.

"How she does talk! When she once began to-night, nobody could have got

in a word, not even if it had been a prayer."

"What a delightful person! Don't you think that your mamma would ask me to meet her at lunch on one of these days, before the sad one of your departure?"

"Ma ask you! Why I'll ask you. Come the day after to-morrow. To-morrow—just let me tell you what we are going to do to-morrow. We are going to lunch with our minister. We're going to hear that lovely little Mrs. Scott-Siddons read in the afternoon. We're going to dine at Twickenham. We're coming in from Twickenham to a ball; and my dress is going to be canary-coloured gauze, looped up with Johnny-Jump-ups."

"May I ask what under the heavens they are?" asked Adrian.

"Why, don't you know what Johnny-Jump-ups are? Pansies—heartsease! Don't you ever call them Johnny-Jump-ups?"

"Never! It is the most hideous name that I ever heard for a little velvety, dainty, low-growing flower."



“I’ve called them that ever since I was born, and I intend to go on calling them so for ever,” answered Miss Pussie, with spirit.

“Do you mean to say that if people to-night admire the flowers on your dress, that you will say, ‘I am glad that you like my Johnny-Jump-ups;’ or ‘Yes, are not my Johnny-Jump-ups pretty?’ or something to that effect?”

“Of course I shall. I hate affectation; and I have a right to call my own flowers by my own name.”

“If you were to call any flower ‘by your own name,’ I should have boxes filled with it growing in my rooms, and never be without one in my coat. By the way, what *is* your name? You were not christened Pussie, of course.”

“Why, certainly not. I was christened Elizabeth. And that reminds me that our finest friend in London, Lady Elizabeth Ilderton, spoke rather huffily to me in the park to-day. I wonder why? I know. She should have gone in first the other

night when she was dining with us. Mrs. Merrivale went first, because she is years, and years, and years older. Yes, it must be that, of course. Is it not too funny that people should want to go first through a hole in the wall?"

"Very funny; but no funnier than hundreds of other social observances."

"Well, I'm awfully sorry about it. She is the only Lady anybody we know in London. But it's our own fault; it was very stupid of us. I hate blunders."

"I should think that you had lived long enough in France never to commit any. French people never make blunders."

"But I am not a French person; I am an American," answered Pussie, bristling like an angry sparrow. "No place but the dear old one in Providence will ever seem like home to me. The great hotel in Paris is not *home*; oh, that clattering paved court-yard! At home, you go upstairs—up a high flight—you open a door, and there, to your astonishment, you find yourself in the garden! The garden is in ter-

paces; you go up, and up, and up—seven times up—until at last you come to iron gates, that are on quite a different street from the one that the front door is on—almost in another part of the town. Oh, such cherries grow in the garden! And at night you can hear the ripe plums falling; and there are Croton grapes, and simple, old-fashioned flowers, a great deal nicer than the ones in the greenhouses at our place at Newport. Old-fashioned flowers, that don't need tending, and fixing up, and fussing over, and that make one remember things by their scent—birthdays, and sick days, and naughty days, and good days, and happy days. And some of the flower-beds are marked out with clam-shells. I don't believe you ever saw a clam-shell in your life; and you haven't Baltimore orioles. *We* have. There are always plenty of them in the garden when the summer comes; and if we hadn't larks and night-ingales, we had robins, and a Louisiana mocking-bird in a cage. He used to sing at night until he made me feel home-sick,

although I was at home. Have you a garden that you are fond of at your place in the country ?”

“ We have a garden, yes,” answered Adie, thinking with pain and confusion of the sordid hand that kept the garden wild and half-neglected.

“ Tell me about it,” said Pussie; “ I don’t know much about English places and gardens.”

“ There is very little for me to tell. We boys never cared for anything but the fruit—the flower-garden is separate. There is a rose-walk that is pretty ; first a trellis, then paths between rose-trees and rose-bushes of every sort. I never go there much, but my cousins like it, and walk there—particularly Angela—alone, or with Captain North ” (nodding over at Henry), “ looking very sentimental, with a black lace something or other over her head and shoulders, and a long gown sweeping up the rose-leaves behind her.”

“ Oh, then Captain North—(is he only a captain ?)—lives near you ?”



“Yes; his father is the vicar.”

“How attractive-looking he is, and yet so ugly. Why, his hair is almost as red as mine!”

“Yes, almost,” said Adie, contracting his eyelids, and surveying it.

“I wish powder would come in fashion!” said Pussie, tragically.

“It is in fashion, is it not?”

“No, not for the hair. I meant, of course, for the hair.”

“I should be very sorry to see your hair disguised in any sort of way.”

“With powdered hair, rouge, darkened eyebrows, antimony under my eyes, and three patches, I am a different creature. I am what the butterfly is to the grub.”

“I can imagine that you look very much changed; but the grub state is so much the *cleaner*.”

“Nothing could be purer and sweeter than violet-powder,” answered Pussie, frowning; “and rouge is only scented pink-water, and patches are only glazed silk, and antimony—what is antimony? I don’t know.”

“A metallic ore. But, come, talk about gardens, not get-ups. I like much better to hear you talk of flowers than cosmetics. Tell me something more of your old garden at home, and I shall forget that speech of yours about the orchids.”

Pussie shook her head. “What can you care to hear about a garden in a little new American town? A common old garden full of plebeian flowers, beds marked out with clam-shells, and fruit trees crowded in indiscriminately.”

Adrian thought it pleasing that the spoilt girl preferred to make a treasure in her memory of the old home—that evidently had nothing fine or grand about it, and that had probably been her father’s home in his boyhood, before wealth came to him—rather than of the sea-side villa at Newport, or the hotel in Paris; not only preferred to treasure it in her memory, but preferred to talk of it to a stranger like himself. Then he remembered that she had spoken at some length of the hotel in Paris, but the tone had been so different.

“ I do care,” he said heartily—“ I care very much to hear about it.”

At this moment, however, Henry, remembering that the night was nearly gone, if not quite, rose to his feet to go ; and Adrian felt that he must needs do likewise.

“ Then you will come to luncheon the day after to-morrow ?” said Pussie, as she shook hands with him.

“ And meet the woman of muscular mind ?”

“ Yes. Oh, do wait while I tell you a little anecdote of her. She told it to me herself.”

“ No, no, Pussie,” said Mrs. Smith, “ don’t ; you would make her appear in a wrong light to a stranger, and she is really very smart.”

“ Yes ; and as clever a woman as you could meet anywhere,” subjoined Mr. Smith. (They were all standing together now.) “ Not handsome ; very homely, sir. The complete pig-eye—lash, and all the furniture round. It’s seldom you see it. I

shouldn't like to be obliged to live with Miss Floy Fairfield, and have to be constantly looking up and meeting that eye."

"Why, pa! You would soon get to think it not a defect, but an endearing young charm," said Pussie.

"Captain North, won't you come and lunch with us too, the day after to-morrow?"

No, Henry could not. He was excessively sorry; but he had an engagement.

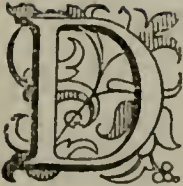
"I shall hope to see you to-morrow morning in the park," said Adrian. "Good-night."



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SISTERS LAWLESS.

“Now our white sail flutters down,  
Now it broadly takes the breeze;  
Now the wharves upon the town,  
Lessening, leave us by degrees.”

“EAR NORTH,  
“As you know, I don’t  
care much for girls; but I  
found the Lawlesses so cheery and that,  
that I have asked them to sail from South-  
ampton to Ryde, in the Brynhilda, on  
Tuesday. Will you come? Meet us at  
Southampton. Take the earliest train  
from town, and I will send a boat for you to  
—I can’t tell you the name of the place, for I

---

don't know it—but you will have to go down a lot of steps.

“Yours,

“R. VANE.

“Cowes, July 31st.”

So, lucidly, ran a note received by Henry on the Monday evening preceding the Tuesday specified.

“Dick Vane wants me to go to Ryde with him to-morrow,” observed Henry to his uncle.

They were sitting together after dinner in old General North's sitting-room, at his hotel in Albemarle Street. The General had fared too sumptuously for his good, and was indigestively testy.

“To ride? Well, and why shouldn't you go to ride, eh? You can hire a horse, and sit it, I suppose, unless he's going to lend you one, and then you can sit that.”

“No, no; I don't mean ride a horse: he wants me to go to Ryde on his yacht, from Southampton. I shall be back again at night, I dare say.”

"I trust you will; I trust you will. That young donkey, Goodwin, is coming to dine with me, you know. I want you to help me out. He can't talk. Zany!"

"I am afraid that I cannot manage to be back in time for dinner; perhaps I may even be obliged to stay all night. Put him off until Wednesday. Here, I'll write at once."

"And say what?"

"Oh, I don't know; say that you want him particularly to meet me, and that I am unavoidably absent to-morrow, but not the day after."

His uncle grunted assent; and he scrawled and despatched a note, with a determinedly illegible signature.

Henry and the birds were up almost at the same time on Tuesday morning. The birds were accustomed to early rising, however, and he was not. By the time he arrived at Southampton, he was asleep in a quaint position, and breathing heavily.

"Please, sir," said the guard, touching

his arm and his own cap, "Southampton, sir."

Henry, who had gone asleep, with a pretty little girl in a sailor hat and red ribbon, staring at him with eyes as round as wedding-rings, awoke with a ridiculous great start, pulled his own shiny tarpaulin down on his forehead (it had been hanging on the back of his head like that of a sailor in the frontispiece to a nautical song), and, staring about him, found himself the sole occupant of the carriage, and the guard waiting to take his ticket.

"We ain't at the station," he remarked, sleepily.

"Pier, sir. Don't go no further, sir."

Henry on this got out on to the platform.

"Boat for Cowes, sir? Straight on."

Yawning until his jaws gave a slight click, indicative of unlocking, Henry shook his head, and accosted a nautical-looking person in a naval cap.

"Where would a boat be likely to be sent from a yacht? There is a place with



a lot of steps, you know. Can you direct me at all?"

Yes, this nautical gentleman thought that he could; and he did—a little.

He took him through a paved street, already beginning to be scorchingly hot, past a great hotel, down amongst a confusion of tramways, and ropes, and chains, and navvies, and sailors. The sun beat fiercely down on Henry's shiny black hat, and fiercely up into his eyes from the calm, blue water, as he and his guide stood at the top of a few very dilapidated steps, looking in vain for the Brynhilda's boat.

"Try the next one, sir; it's only a stone's throw."

More trams, more noise, more cranks, and chains, and ropes; a flight of stone steps, and the Brynhilda's boat lying at the foot of them.

Henry, giving his friend the twelve honest pence that he had earned, went down the steps—myriads of them; and, taking his seat in the boat, was pulled off to the yacht.

It was heaven's own day—all gold-flecked water, down-tufted sky, and crystal air. Several American ships were lying about a mile and a half off from shore; an English Admiral was going on board one of them, and the great guns were booming out a salute in honour of him; the dun smoke lay lazily on the water, as though loath to rise up and drift away. One of the long, white American boats, protected by an awning, manned by black sailors and white, and with two lads in uniform lounging in the stern, shot past. All the fascinating stir and animation of a great port were going on about him; he half envied Vane his yacht, and this boat with its sailors in their cool, clean duck, and flat straw hats, and muscular arms that pulled the oars so lustily.

On board the yacht, he found Clemence, Angela, and Bertie, who had come to Southampton by a local train from Barport—and also a little Mrs. Baillie, who was chaperoning the party.

Angela, looking very engaging dressed

all in white, was seated in a low wicker chair, her little sailor hat pitched at the back of her head as his had been an hour ago ; her fair hair hanging in one or two delicate tendrils on her forehead, and drooping in soft, loose curls behind ; her locket on a broad purple ribbon, which matched the ribbon round her hat. Henry was perfectly sure that he had never seen her look so lovely.

At her feet, in a frog-like sort of position, was Mr. Vane. He nodded to Henry, and went straight on with his story, reserving further greetings till a little later on :—

“ Just in the midst of an awful pause, this unfortunate young man said, in the most propitiating way—‘ The trees about here are very green, my lord.’

“ ‘ Would you have them *blue*, sir ?’ roared my grandfather.”

“ You and the boat found each other all right, then, North ?”

“ Yes ; with the assistance of a nautical outsider.”

"I thought you'd be all right if I told you a lot of steps."

"I went to a wrong lot first; but the right ones were only a little way off, however. What a beautiful day!"

"Yes; only I would not mind having a bit more of a breeze. I think we had better be off at once. We shall only crawl along."

He got himself into an erect position, and went forward.

"You remind me to-day of the tall white Pampas grass that grows on the lawn at the Vicarage," Henry said, looking at Angela.

"I am sorry to remind you of anything so shivering and big-headed."

"Pray do not be tart on a day like this; it must be bad for your soul."

Angela shrugged her shoulders. "How pretty those men-of-war look—one, two, three, four, five of them."

"Yes; American ships. By-the-way, I left Adie in London very much engrossed with some Americans."



“ Did you ?” said Angela, showing a total want of interest. “ (Look at the sails going up.) Imagine never having seen London. Perhaps next spring I may get up there though.”

“ Yes, of course, under your sister’s wing ; how very nice.”

“ No !” said Angela, shaking out her dress with a savagely impatient movement. “ Nothing of the sort ; nothing would induce me to be under the wing of a turtle-dove ! Aunt Maria likes London, and has a small house in Curzon Street—let this season. I am sure that if I persecuted her a little, she would go up with me ; and there are some of my mother’s family who would take me by the hand. But, oh dear ! if I feel next summer as I have felt this, Aunt Maria is perfectly safe.”

She had begun her sentence with something like animation, but it all died away before she had reached the last word. Her eyes wandered off to Bertie, Clemence, and Mrs. Baillie, who were leaning against the side talking together.

The top of Mrs. Baillie's head reached about to Clemence's chin. She was pretty, quite pretty, with large round brown eyes that had just the intensely melancholy expression of a horribly mischievous monkey's. Her dress was that of the complete yacht's-woman ; blue navy serge, dark stockings and canvas shoes, a square open collar showing quarter of an inch of the chain that went round her neck, and to which a whistle was attached, a strong leather belt, where a seaman's knife hung by the real round white seaman's cord. On the back of her compact little head hung an unadorned sailor hat. She was trying to talk to Bertie around Clemence.

Clemence wondered why Bertie did not take a little more trouble to converse with her, since she was taking so much trouble to exchange words with him.

"We are going to Ryde to sit on the pier, look at the people, and hear the band play. That sounds sensational, does it not?" said Angela, not withdrawing her eyes from the trio.

"I like the sound of it very much."

"Perhaps you expect to find some friends, or friend there?"

"No, no," said Henry, disclaiming eagerly.

"It is nice to have a yacht," remarked Angela, not attending to him, "when you are young. Nothing can be very nice after youth is past; it is a disagreeable thought that you may reach a time when the pretty pet name of your youth no longer suits you (fancy 'Lily,' or 'Bella' in spectacles and a false front!) When nothing can possibly be becoming to you any more, when the verbs with pleasant meanings are all in the past tense to you. Eld is not so hard for a man to bear, but even for him it is not nice."

"No, it is not. But I cannot say that I have any dread of it. One can always play whist, and take a grandfatherly interest in the young and giddy, and ride a cob even if one has to mount a step-ladder to get upon its back, and drink curious old port till the cockles of one's ancient heart

are warmed. Are you tired holding up your parasol? Let me hold it for you."

"It is because it is one of these walking-stick things that it is so heavy," said Angela, relinquishing it, and letting him take it. "You would not offer to hold it for me if I were thirty years older than I am."

"I do not know about that; but I *do* know that I would not offer to hold any one's parasol but yours."

"Then give it back to me, for that is not mine: it is Aunt Maria's; and she did not lend it to me; I stole it for the day. It was so much larger than my only one; and look what a pretty carved ebony handle it has."

"It is to be hoped that nothing will happen to it," said Henry, a little uncomfortably. "It has, as you say, a remarkably pretty handle. What would you do if you broke it, or dropped it overboard?"

"There is not the slightest danger of my doing either," she answered, contemning



the idea. "I am not a loser and breaker, as it is some people's evil fortune to be."

"It is my evil fortune," said Mr. Vane, coming back to Angela's side. "The most miserable moment of my life was once when I broke a Dresden group at the back of an Italian princess's sofa."

"Fancy having Dresden groups at the back of sofas!" cried Angela; "how lovely, and amusing. What fun to watch the miseries of men sitting near them, and afraid of them."

"I am sure that never occurred to the princess. I do not think that she even remembered that they were there, and she was awfully nice about it when I broke it, and miserable because I replaced it as well as I could."

"I should not like such a little catastrophe to overtake me," observed Henry, looking very melancholy, "as I never have any money. To buy a Dresden group in a strange place where I had not credit, I should be obliged to pawn my watch and all my extensive stock of jewellery."

Here Mrs. Baillie, intensely disgusted at Bertie's impenetrability to her fascinations, came and seated herself by the others. Clemence, who would not thus be left in a conspicuous loneliness with Bertie, suggested going also.

Angela almost directly jumped up, and went to stare over at the blinding blue and gold water. After a few minutes of indecision and hesitation, Henry followed her, and stood beside her.

"Why did you come?" said Angela, not very graciously; "to see that I do not drop my aunt's parasol into the water, as you were evidently fearful of my doing? I was just beginning to feel sentimental. I was telling myself in 'mournful numbers' that my life was very unlike this gliding over summer waters that we are now enjoying. I was telling—let me see, what next——"

"Why your life seems to me to be as calm and unruffled as a life can well be," rejoined Henry.

“ Ah,” said Angela, mysteriously, “ there is more in a life than meets the eye.”

“ Yes, it must necessarily be so. A man carries the least part of his real self into public. It generally happens that the very things most interesting—absorbing—to a man, are such as cannot be obtruded on his friends. But with a young lady like yourself, I cannot fancy that there is anything of this sort, unless you are meditating going on the stage.”

“ Oh, those were ‘ words without thoughts ’ of mine ; they meant nothing. I dare say my—my sister would tell you that I adopt the melancholy for face and manner, because I think it becoming.”

“ And would she be right ? ”

“ No ! ” exclaimed Angela, sharply.

“ Every expression is becoming to you. It suits your face to be angry. It is even becoming to you to be bored by a bee, as you were last Thursday.”

“ I was not bored, I was frightened.”

“ Very well, then, it is an equally becoming expression that of fright.”

“If it gets rough at all, and I am ill, I wonder if you will think *that* becoming to me?”

“Yes,” said Henry, trying to infuse a great deal of feeling into the little tri-lettered word.

Angela, with a very marked air of wishing to change the subject, said, “What an odd-looking little woman Mrs. Baillie is. Aunt Maria knew her before she was married. She has been staying for two days at Creyke; she came over from Cowes; they are spending August there. She was brought up by her grandmother; is it not funny, Aunt Maria has the highest opinion of any one who was brought up by their grandmother, because she was brought up by my great-grandmother—her grandmother.”

“No, not at all funny; quite natural.”

“Mrs. Baillie says that they can get nothing to eat at Cowes; that her man and somebody else’s housekeeper had a fearful quarrel at the poulterer’s over a chicken, and—you are not listening to me!”



“Yes I am ; I merely glanced over at her ; her airs and graces with Bertie are so comical. Notwithstanding her having been brought up by her grandmother, she is considered a mischievous little lady.”

“How?” asked Angela, eagerly ; “charming people away from those to whom the law or their own word has bound them ?”

“Yes, something of that sort. Bertie looks about as pleased as a man does with the mosquito buzzing around his head.”

Angela gave a little derisive laugh. “Nobody knows what he may be feeling.”

“No ; but to judge from his looks, he is bored.”

“He cannot be bored ; she is the most amusing little woman ; she must be amusing him.”

“So is Vane, your sister ; what a delightfully happy laugh,” as the music of Clemence’s rippling merriment came to them.

Angela directly placed in violent contrast to it her own mirthless, scornful cachinnation.

Gray, soft, rainy clouds were beginning

to drift over the serene blue sky ; the faint breeze had so almost entirely died away that they were hardly moving. They had ample time to study the green, undulating, particularly peaceful shores of the Isle of Wight ; the square towers of Osborne rising above the trees ; Norris Castle sitting gray and symmetrical on its green velvet sward ; emerald field, and grazing kine, and scampering flock. Also, they had ample time and agreeable calm for lunching. It was four o'clock when they passed the hulks and began to lower their canvas preparatory to casting anchor. Soon they were going gaily off to shore in a boat, taking their way between the yachts, past other boats on their way to or from shore. The notes of the band came to them over the water with the peculiar lingering cadence, and clear, melancholy sweetness that its flight over water always gives to music.

“ My bit yacht is here,” said Bertie ; “ you know I sold it to Ruthven the other day. There she is—the Firefly ” (pointing to a wee white thing that was bobbing

softly up and down in the wake of a passing packet-boat). "If I don't see him on the pier, I think I must go over and say how d'ye do to him. You can't take us back to Southampton, Vane, according to your kind intention ; there's not a thimbleful of wind——"

"No, bother it," interrupted Mr. Vane, grumblingly.

"So that our best plan will be to go over to Portsmouth, and catch the train for Barmouth, which arrives at about a quarter to nine."

"Really," burst out Mr. Vane, "a sailing-yacht is no good. I think that I shall sell the *Brynhilda*, and get a steam-yacht ; there you are, as independent as a coach-horse. It is a nuisance to be always at the mercy of the weather ; here I am in the Valley of Humiliation at having asked you to go to and from Ryde with me, without the ability to carry out my proposition."

"But there is no romance about a steam yacht," said Angela.

"If Adie were here, he would tell her

not to be a sickly sentimentalist," said Bertie, in a low tone to Clemence.

"Romance in these days is only a curiosity of literature," remarked Henry, laughing.

"But, indeed," said Clemence, "I should think the throbbing of the machinery, and the smell of smoke, and the jar of the screw, or paddles, would be serious drawbacks to the pleasure of a steam-yacht."

Mr. Vane, who was horribly angry with the sweet, dead calm, was of course loud in his praises of steam-yachts, which, as he said, "could snap their fingers at the deadest calm that ever was seen."

There was a great crowd of people on the pier ; every available seat was occupied. Angela's lovely fair head and face, with the brim of her hat forming a sort of nimbus or aureola, created no small sensation as it appeared above the level of the planks.

"I am afraid that there is not one seat," said Henry to her.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," hazarded Mr. Vane ; "we will go up to the top of



the pier, and each get into a Bath chair, and come down in it !”

This met with the amusement that so exquisitely funny a suggestion merited. Mrs. Baillie and Clemence exerted themselves to give a faint, faint laugh. Angela did not even smile.

“ We will stand here,” said Clemence, “ and wait for some one to get up and go away, which they are sure to do.”

“ I think that I will walk about and look for Ruthven, and if I do not find him, go over and hunt him up,” said Bertie, who was hankering to go off to the little yacht on which he had spent many pleasant hours.

“ Do not fail to be back in time for our boat,” said Clemence.

“ What a bore that I cannot take you back to Southampton !” exclaimed Mr. Vane, gazing discontentedly first at the low-lying, storm-promising clouds, then at the unruffled dead calm water.

“ What a number of pretty faces,” said Clemence ; “ do tell me who some of them are, Mrs. Baillie.”

“Oh, I am not very well up in Ryde people,” was the reply.

“See that man with the beaky face talking to the girl all blushes, and smiles, and dimples ; are they not nut-cracker and sugar-dolly ?” murmured Angela to Henry.

“Yes, exactly ; capital !” he replied, looking at the wrong people.

Angela’s eyes sought out and followed Bertie, where he roamed alone amongst the fine birds, seeking, but evidently not finding, his friend.

“Clemence can watch him with the feeling ‘he is mine !’” thought Angela.

“I should really like to know who some of these people are,” persisted Clemence, with all a country girl’s naïveté. “Those two little creatures, for instance, who look as if they had just stepped out of a Spanish picture. What romantic little faces. Don’t you know who they are, Mrs. Baillie ?”

Mrs. Baillie shrugged her shoulders, and shook her head. No, she had not the slightest idea who they were.

Angela, leaning one elbow on the railing,

looked about her with uplifted eyebrows, conscious of the admiration her fair blonde prettiness (beauty, she herself would have called it) was exciting. Clemence, sun-burnt, and dark-haired, was not in the least noticeable ; yet when once the eye had mastered the details of feature and expression of those two faces, how Angela's lost, and Clemence's gained !

Angela's, sharply chiselled, coldly clever, coldly fair ; Clemence's, softly moulded, warmly coloured, frank, tender, and noble.

" Bertie's quest does not seem to be a successful one," said Henry, as Bertie, having made the circle of the pier, was to be seen coming towards them again, taking his graceful way between the seats and the Bath chairs.

" He is not here, Ruthven," he remarked, as he joined them.

" Take my boat, and go over to the ' Firefly ' in her," said Mr. Vane.

" I shall only be gone a short time," answered he. " You will all be here until our boat goes, I suppose ? for the next

Cowes boat after this one that is just starting now does not leave until ours does. That will be yours, Mrs. Baillie? What are you going to do, Henry? Are you coming on to the Vicarage, or are you off to town again?"

"I must go to town, I am sorry to say. I promised my uncle that I would be back to-night, if possible."

"You had much better come to the Vicarage, and go on to London to-morrow morning," said Angela, ardently wishing not to have to go back alone with Clemence and Bertie.

"Or stay on the yacht with me," proposed Mr. Vane; "it was hardly worth while coming down just for this."

"Yes, it was," answered Henry; "and I must go back. The General hates to be left alone in the evening."

"May we all, in our old age, have such scrupulously attentive nephews," said Angela.

Then Bertie went away, even before she had quite finished speaking, and in a mo-



ment they saw him dart out from under the pier. He looked back, and smiled to them.

Presently, two or three acquaintances of Mrs. Baillie's descried her, and came up to talk to her. She was not a greedy married flirt, although fond of admiration, and she drew Clemence into her conversation, introducing her friends to her.

Angela would not be drawn in and introduced, giving all her attention to Henry and Mr. Vane. In the pauses of the music she meandered up and down the pier between them, talking with her usual combination of volubility and listlessness, while, from time to time, her glances strayed over to the little "Firefly," lying quite still on the level blue-gray water, except when one of the many packets, passing close by it, left wavelets behind for it to gently rock up and down on.

The large clock hands travelled on. The band played "God save the Queen," gathered up their music, and prepared to go back to Portsmouth. Gradually the pier

thinned out. Then the sun set, and the soft, pearly dusk began to wrap the shores of the mainland, and the yachts, and the water, and the houses down by the water's edge in its gauzy, uncertain folds.

The yachts one by one hung out their lights ; Mrs. Baillie's friends said good-bye to her and Clemence, and went away to their dinner.

"Why does not that little yacht that Bertie is on hang out its light ?" exclaimed Clemence. "My heart stood still a minute ago ; I certainly thought that packet was going to run it down. How can they manage to thread their way between the yachts in this perplexing light ? And they are coming and going incessantly. It is very nearly time for our boat to leave. I do wish Bertie would come !"

Mrs. Baillie, who did not want to lose her boat, also wished that he would make his appearance.

"He is sure to be in time," said Henry ;  
"he is——"

His speech was never finished, for they

were all startled by a disagreeable crash and crunch, out on the water.

Clemence gave a terrified cry ; and then they could just distinguish the little " Fire-fly," with a packet-boat that had struck it backing away from it. The poor toy-craft seemed to quiver for an instant, and then, with a surging sound as the water rushed into it—and audible to them where they stood—went down ; and in the space of only a few seconds, the spot where it had been was covered by the eddying water.

Then all was confusion and excitement. Nearly every yacht let down a boat ; boats shot out from shore ; the loud noise of the packet reversing its paddle-wheels, mingled with shouts and loudly-given directions.

" Pray control yourself !" said Angela to her sister, in a frozen voice. " He undoubtedly knows how to swim, and he will probably be picked up at once."

Before rushing off, Henry had just time to hear this, and marvel at such wondrous calmness ; for Clemence was half distracted with terror and apprehension, and Mrs.

Baillie was beginning to sob hysterically, although she had known Bertie but three days.

“Of course the great danger is that the packet will go over them,” said Angela, apparently taking a cool mental survey of contingencies.

“I did not think of that!” cried poor Clemence, running to the farther end of the pier, and leaning wildly over. “If it was only not so dark, and I could see! That is terrible about the packet!”

The stir increased. People, with that strange appetite for the horrible, came flocking eagerly to the utmost limit of step and foothold, staring intently out at the dim, crowded water, with an excited, ungrammatical exchange of ejaculatory remarks.

“It’s Mr. Montfort’s.”

“No, it isn’t.”

“I says just now, ‘Well, how them packets can steer clear o’ that crowd o’ yacht ’s a mystery——”

“They’ve picked up one——”



“How many was there aboard?”

“My! if the packet-boat should run over ’em!”

“They’ve got ’em!”

“Here they come!”

Stampede of the great unpolished to another vantage-point, closer to where a boat could be seen making for the nearest steps under the pier.

“How can you elbow your way through such a vulgar crowd!” exclaimed Angela to her sister, as Clemence, with no thought but of her lover, pushed her way to the topmost step.

“How can *you* think of such things at a time like this?” said little Mrs. Baillie, turning sharply on her, and keeping as close to Clemence as she could.

Angela, too, followed, notwithstanding her own words.

The boat came up to the steps, and a dripping figure sprang out; turning, however, as soon as his feet were on the step, to ask and obtain the name of his rescuers.

It was not Bertie’s voice! And in a

moment, the flaring light that had already been lighted revealed the dark features of Mr. Ruthven, who, with his picturesque scarlet cap still on his head, and with his teeth chattering, and his lips pale and bluish, came slowly up the steps, scowling involuntarily as the broad light struck his eyes.

"Where is Bertie?" said Clemence, leaning over and grasping his arm.

He started violently, recognizing her only after an instant's blank stare into her face.

"Oh! Miss Lawless — your cousin is quite safe, you may rest assured—I know I heard his voice—we got widely separated —another boat must have fished him up."

Naturally the poor young man was spasmodic in his utterances, drenched, chilled, and confused as he was.

"Are you sure he is safe?" said Clemence, imploringly.

"Yes; sure—certain. He said, 'Throw me an oar.' There were boats all around him."

“If there were boats all about him, why should he have wanted an oar thrown to him?” said Angela, in her low, even voice.

No one attended to her. Clemence, not half reassured, could only gaze out in an agony of suspense upon the ever-darkening water. Young Ruthven, shaking and shivering like one in an ague, waited with them; unable to go and get the dry clothing and hot spirit that he was sorely in need of, until his own eyes had convinced him of his friend’s safety.

Fortunately, they were not long left in uncertainty. In three or four minutes—but, oh! what vast spaces of time those three or four minutes seemed!—another boat glided up to the steps, and the instant it touched three men jumped out—Vane, Henry, and Bertie—Bertie hatless, and with his brown hair lying wetly close and sleek to his head.

Clemence, in a transport of thankfulness and relief, laid her hands on his soaked shoulders, with one or two broken words—Angela bit her lip hard—he, not nearly

so much chilled and shocked as Ruthven, answered gaily, and they all went up together to the refreshment-room on the pier, where hot brandy-and-water was given to them, restoring to Ruthven's blue lips something that looked like circulation, and to Bertie's face its old bronzed glow.

"What is to be done with us?" said Ruthven, abruptly. "My home on the ocean wave having retired *under* the ocean wave, I have, as a natural consequence, no dry clothing."

"We have lost our only train to Barport," said Bertie.

"You and Ruthven must come on the 'Brynhilda,' of course," said Vane.

"And you," said Mrs. Baillie, turning to the sisters, "must come to Cowes with me, and stay until to-morrow."

"How easily we are all disposed of," said Mr. Ruthven.

"All but myself," subjoined Henry, in his most melancholy manner; "I am left out in the cold. Fortunately there are plenty of trains to town."



"Yes, you must go back to town," said Mr. Vane, laughing, "for the express purpose of giving a thrilling account of this at your club to-night?"

"I wish that my yacht had not happened to be the heroine of the adventure," remarked Ruthven, ruefully. "What could we have been thinking about not to notice that there was no light? Both my men were ashore, and——"

"The sooner you are off now, the better," cut in Henry; "unless you want to be down with rheumatic fever."

"We'll be at Cowes to-morrow morning, wind and weather permitting," said Vane to Mrs. Baillie and the sisters; "and, after all, I shall take you back to Southampton."

"Oh! Bertie," murmured Clemence in her cousin's ear, "I can hardly speak for thankfulness——"

"We shall lose our boat unless we run," cried Angela.

"Captain North," said Mrs. Baillie, imploringly, "if you would only see us safely

to Cowes ! I am so shaken ! Must you really go back to town from here ?”

“Certainly not,” answered Henry, emphatically. “I had no idea of allowing you to go alone. Of course I shall come with you.”


Then the party separated, and went its diverse ways. Mrs. Baillie, Henry, and the sisters hurried to the Cowes boat ; Ruthven, Bertie, and Vane went off to the “Brynhilda,” in the “Brynhilda’s” boat.

“He was asking me to be his best man when the confounded thing came bang down on us,” shivered out Mr. Ruthven, getting in.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON THE BALCONY.

“ The boats are drawn : the nets drip bright,  
Dark casements gleam, old songs are sung ;  
And out upon the verge of night  
Green lights from lonely rocks are hung.”

“ OOD heavens! I am afraid  
that your sister has fainted,”  
cried Mrs. Baillie, as, just  
after they had taken their places, Angela  
fell heavily up against her.

Henry sped away to fetch a glass of wine for her. Poor little Mrs. Baillie regretted that her nautical accoutrements did not include a smelling-bottle.

Clemence had one, however ; but almost before she had time to unscrew the stopper, Angela opened her eyes, and, starting for-

ward, exclaimed, "Ugh, the cold dark water; Bertie is really safe!" And then she could have bitten her tongue out; for she felt that those two or three words told a tale to the shrewd little woman of the world who was supporting her. It made her in a rage with herself.

"They are both safe," said Clemence, soothingly.

"Oh, dear," cried Mrs. Baillie, "I wish we were safely at Cowes."

"What a bore I am," said Angela. "I assure you I feel perfectly well now; I have fainted once or twice before; it is constitutional, you know. But I had no idea that I was going to make a fool of myself here. No; no more wine, thanks, Captain North."

"Yes, now that it is all over!" rejoined Mrs. Baillie, "and at the time you were so thoroughly calm and collected."

Angela did not reply, and, seeing that she was quite herself again, they fell to talking, as was natural, of the misadventure that had just occurred.



"Of course, the great danger was, that in the bewildering half-light, the packet might go over them. It is astonishing, though, how comparatively little loss of life is entailed by accidents like this," said Henry.

"How pretty and forlorn that boy looked in his red cap as he came drowned and shivering up the steps. I have never seen him before," said Mrs. Baillie.

"Ruthven? He is not so very juvenile; he must be five or six-and-twenty," returned Henry.

"But that is very, *very* young," said Mrs. Baillie, trying to exaggerate her air of looking at that age from a standpoint of advanced years.

"Oh, yes, young enough to be a play-fellow for your youngest son," replied Henry, humouring her.

"I want to see your children," said Clemence; "I am so fond of children."

"You will soon be gratified, for here we are," returned Mrs. Baillie, as the boat sidled up to the pier. "Give your arm to

Miss Angela Lawless, Captain North, please. Miss Lawless and I will take care of each other."

"I had no sort of idea that you were so upset by that," said Henry, in a low tone, to Angela, as she slipped her hand within his arm.

"Nor had I," she answered, dryly; "but I am quite myself again now, I do assure you. I generally feel a thing *after* it has happened; some people do, you know."

"You are to dine with us, of course?" asked Mrs. Baillie.

"Thanks; I shall be too glad; I intend to stay here to-night at the hotel," he continued, to Angela, "and go on to Southampton with you all to-morrow."

"Your poor uncle!" said Angela, laughing a little.

"Yes, are you not sorry for him? It is your fault, too."

"Mine!—By the way, where is Aunt Maria's parasol? I have no recollection whatever of where I last had it. So much for boasting of one's good gifts. I fear me

much that I have lost it. Oh, how angry she will be, unless I never say anything about it."

"You could not do that," said Henry, "for she might suspect her maid, or some of the other servants, you know."

"No, I don't know," answered Angela, crossly. "Perhaps I left it on the yacht, or in the boat, after all."

Through the quaint and narrow High Street of Cowes they went, where every other shop has maritime tendencies, down a steep, dark, narrow alley, out along the water's edge for a short distance, into the small house with its pretty balcony, that Mr. Baillie had taken for August and half of September.

The sisters were disposed of in a large room, and tiny one off, where they made such limited preparations for dinner as were within their compass.

Half of dinner-time was devoted to giving Mr. Baillie (a nondescript, and indescribable gentleman) a full and minutely detailed account of the accident. Mrs.

Baillie, who prided herself on being graphic, found herself wishing that there were other guests to listen to the most vivid description that she ever gave of anything in her life.

At dessert, children of assorted sizes ran in, with sleek heads and shining faces.

One of the smaller ones, going up to its mother, said, in the delightfully frank childish whisper that is more distinctly audible than any grown person's fullest key, "Mamma, I've got a present for you."

"Very well, dear."

"But, mamma, listen; it's a whole piece of my hair that Charlie pulled out because I tried to open one of the puppies' eyes. It's on your dressing-table, sealed up in an envelope, *skin and all*," said the child, which had probably inherited the gift of being graphic from its mother.

Clemence, who had easily coaxed the smallest of all to her side, and was being very much amused by its baby prattle, was sorry when they vanished for the night. She was also sorry to find, on returning to



the drawing-room, that both her host and hostess had a strong penchant for b  zique.

For worlds, she could not have helped showing that kindly pretence of pleasure, which the world, when it is ill-natured, calls polite hypocrisy, but which is the agreeable veneering that often hides a coarse and ugly grain. She placed herself with cheerful alacrity at the table, with Mr. and Mrs. Baillie, while Angela and Henry seated themselves at the long window ; or, rather, Henry sat outside and smoked, and Angela on the threshold, half in, half out.

The gray night clouds hung low over the hushed water. Out in the warm darkness were sounds of a rope unwinding from a capstan, as some fairy craft cast anchor ; the dip of oars, the clear voice of one in authority, giving his orders, the grating noise of a boat, as gliding mysteriously up to the slip, it touched, and the rough stone grazed its side ; the rattling of oars, as they were shipped, and now and then the sweet notes of a clarionet or guitar, dulcified and prolonged by the night, the breath-

less air, and the reverberating water. The lights of the yachts seemed to palpitate like stars. There was a balsamic and seaweedy smell in the air, from the many trees, and the wet sea-mossy stones that the retreating tide had left uncovered.

"I do not believe that this is Cowes!" said Henry, suddenly.

"Do you not? Why?"

"Because I have been here so often before, and never felt like this."

"What *have* you felt like?"

"Do not ridicule me," he said, earnestly. "I am in no mood for it. Do you not, too, feel some harmonizing influence in the dead peacefulness of the night, and the broken silence, and the sultry darkness?"

"No," returned Angela, impatiently; "do tell me something amusing; I know that it is dark, and warm, and that sounds come floating over the water. It is just the night to be on the deck of a yacht. How I wish I were on the 'Brynhilda'——" She paused. "It must have been on such a night as this that Bonny Kilmeny stole

home ; that Ginevra sat on the steps of San Bartolommeo, dead, yet still possessing her soul ; a ghost, a spectre, a thing of terror to every one but herself and her lover ;—just such a night as this that Flora MacDonald and Prince ‘ Betty Burke ’ spent on the wild dark water amongst the Hebrides——” Another pause.

Henry, throwing away the end of his cigar, folded his arms, and watched the delicate outline of her cheek, showing white and clearly defined against the strong light in the room behind her. He could distinguish the drooped and musing eyelid, and the line of the pensive mouth ; sweeter and gentler the whole face seemed to be than was its wont. Where were her thoughts ? Back in the past, busy with dead women, and their dead lovers ? Or here, in the living present, resting on her sweet self, and on lovers of her own ?

“ What are you thinking of ? ” he said, bending a little forward, and speaking gently to her, as we speak to one whom we wish to awaken softly, without startling them.



“I am trying to remember when I had that detestable parasol last. How I wish I had not taken it!” she said, looking suddenly up with a frown.

Henry was disappointed into silence.

The cool splash of oars began afar, came near, nearer, and ended with their rattle as they were shipped, the sound of voices floating up pleasantly as the boats’ occupants stepped ashore. Two or three stars glimmered out between the clouds. A strolling Spaniard came under the balcony with his guitar, and began to sing poor, pretty, hackneyed “Mandolinata.” He sang it very well.

“I think I will throw him something,” said Henry, “unless you would rather not hear him sing again.”

“Oh, but I should ; I liked that ; I never heard it before.”

“Really ? Every boy in London who is not whistling it, is singing it.” He threw the man a shilling, and bought himself thereby a Spanish love-song. He never forgot the air of it ; years after a stray



bar of another tune brought it all back to him. Angela, in her white dress, with a black lace veil tied over her fair hair, and with a round fan of white feathers in her long slender hand; the myriad lights twinkling at uneven distances apart, over on the intense darkness of the water; the beating of his own roused heart; the very half-sad, half-happy thoughts that wandered through his mind; and the excited voice of Mrs. Baillie, proclaiming a sequence, in the bright room behind the open window.

As the man finished singing, and, with many thanks, went away, Clemence, having by her success achieved her liberation from the card-table, rose up, and going across the room, stood behind Angela, looking out into the night over her sister's fair head.

"Who won?" asked Henry.

"I; now, Mr. and Mrs. Baillie are fighting it out together a little longer. What numbers of lights! How very pretty they look; I hope the people on board know how pretty they look from shore."

“What do they care?” said Angela, crisply.

“It was just one of my commonplace speeches,” answered Clemence, with a humble little laugh at herself.

“Four aces!—I have beaten him!” cried the victorious Mrs. Baillie, darting forward. Mrs. Baillie, no longer dressed for maritime enjoyments, but with plenty of flounces, puffs, frills, and trinkets. Feeling sure that fair hair would become her brown eyes, she had once bought a bottle of magical “fluid,” that her coiffeur assured her, with his hand on his heart, was “harmless as filtered water; he would be willing to use it on his face!” But, being a nervous little person, she had suffered torments. After applying it two or three times, imaginary pains afflicted her eyes and head; she feared her own pillow where her dye-dampened hair had lain; she was even obliged to wash her face gingerly, lest she should contaminate the sponge. She dreaded getting very warm; she hated to touch her own hair with her own hands;

and yet she went on using the fluid. It was so delightful to look in the glass each morning, and to find herself a shade nearer the desired blonde tint !

She tampered with the fluid in a timid fashion, which resulted in her being striped, like a royal Bengal tiger. However, as she saw a great many women with their heads looking exactly the same, it did not annoy her as much as it might have done.

“ Horrid to struggle with *that* ! ” she said to Clemence, pointing out at the motionless sheet. “ Every one ought to know how to swim. Are you thinking of the Firefly ? How fortunate that your cousin had sold it ! What a loss it will be to that pretty boy.” Rapidly changing her tone of congratulation to one of commiseration : “ I must ask Bertie what his sensations were, as he felt the yacht sinking under him, and the cold water beginning to suck him under. But some men will not describe—or are not able to describe—their sensations. They make one bald adjective or adverb do

duty for what ought to be a whole long sentence. If I were to ask Mr. Baillie how he felt with a possible death staring him in the face, he would say, 'Oh, nasty!'

"Bertie will tell me more than that," began Clemence, laughing.

"Poor Mr. Ruthven looked like an owl with a candle held before its eyes, as he came up the steps," said Angela, striking in.

"He was probably calculating how much he had lost," remarked Henry.

"Indeed he was not; he was much too dazed and bewildered; he could hardly talk coherently. *Calculating!* If you had asked him what two and two made, he would probably have answered, 'Five.'"

"The very sounds are idealized," said Clemence, who was leaning over the balcony railing, drinking in the warm sweetness of the night air; "and though none of God's lamps are out, man has lighted the night with his own. How they tremble and twinkle, those lanterns; and here comes a steamer with one green eye, and one red



one ; how plainly we can hear the paddle-wheels." With a shudder, she thought how one of those powerful blades might have struck the life out of her handsome gallant young lover.

"It is the last boat," said Mrs. Baillie ; "there will be no more to-night."

"Ruthven can claim nothing, you see, for he had no light ; and as the other yachts had theirs, I suppose, of course, they will maintain that he should have had his," said Henry.

"How *could* they have been so careless," said Clemence.

"Most likely in two or three minutes they would have had it up ; that is life," returned Henry. "Words of two or three letters, spaces of time of two or three seconds, are what fates and lives rest on, often."

"The pretty child is probably eating candied chestnuts and drinking claret, and forgetting all about it," said Mrs. Baillie. "Oh, Miss Lawless, do come in and sing something."

Clemence turned away reluctantly from the balmy darkness; and entering the bright room with her hostess, seated herself at the piano.

“Is it not too absurd to hear Mrs. Baillie affecting to consider Mr. Ruthven—a man of four or five or six and twenty—a baby, a child?” said Angela to Henry, in a low voice.

“I dare say to-morrow she will be bewitching Ruthven by that very affectation,” answered he, laughing a little.

“I cannot imagine any man being bewitched by a woman telling him, or implying to him, that she is old enough to be his mother.”

Henry smiled, slightly amused at the shallowness of her girl philosophy. For had he not the recollection of certain speeches of the “my dear boy, I am old enough to be your grandmother” stamp, which found their way very surely to his heart, or rather his vanity, in younger days?

“I am so bewitched myself, that I can-

not stop to think what bewitches other men," he replied.

Angela gave her head a wayward movement, and said nothing—not a word—for a good many minutes.

"How silent you are, all of a sudden," said Henry.

"I cannot be *always* chattering," she answered. "I am waiting for the spirit to move me, as the Quakers do. Did you ever go to a Quaker meeting, and see them sitting with their hats on, twirling their thumbs, and waiting for the spirit to move them? And when it did move them, what a twanging drawl! I can imitate it exactly. Listen—"

"You are a good mimic," he answered, as Angela finished her mimicry.

"I love to mimic people. Clemence hates to hear me. How I wish I had done that while she was out here!"

"Please don't say that; it sounds very naughty."

"Oh, it's only mischief!" answered Angela.

“Hark! Your sister is singing with tears in her voice; she is thinking of Bertie.”

“And *he* is probably in roars of laughter at some funny story that somebody is telling,” said Angela, in a hard voice.

“He is much more likely to be thinking of her, particularly if they are on deck, and he *feels* the night, as I feel it.”

“I am tired of sitting out here in the dark,” said Angela; “come, let us go in.”

There were few boats coming and going now, and the sound of voices was hardly heard. The stillness of the real, sleeping night was beginning to settle over the place.

Inside the room, Clemence was still seated at the piano, playing faint notes with her left hand while she talked to Mrs. Baillie. Mrs. Baillie was drinking soda-water, and had begun on her pet grievance.

“I dare say you may come downstairs tomorrow morning,” she said, turning and including Angela, “and find nothing on the



breakfast-table but the table-cloth. Everybody will be out foraging for the morning meal. I shall not ask you to breakfast, Captain North ; you will be far better off at your hotel."


"I shall come over directly after," answered Henry ; "and now good-night. Pleasant dreams to all of you."

He shook hands all round, and went out into the sultry darkness ; walking slowly along the water's edge, and counting the yacht-lights.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SISTERS LAWLESS.

“A wind came up out of the sea,  
And said, ‘O mists, make room for me !’  
It hailed the ships, and cried, ‘Sail on,  
Ye mariners, the night is gone !’  
It touched the wood-bird’s folded wing,  
And said, ‘O bird, awake and sing !’  
It whispered to the fields of corn,  
‘Bow down, and hail the coming morn !’  
It shouted through the belfry-tower,  
‘Awake, O bell ! proclaim the hou !’  
It crossed the church-yard with a sigh,  
And said, ‘Not yet ! in quiet lie.’”

“S there any wind ?” asked Mrs. Baillie of Mr. Baillie the first thing the next morning.

“Is there any wind ?” asked Clemence

of herself, jumping up at seven o'clock, when she first waked, and going to the window.

Sun and wind both greeted her. The water rolled in laughing ripples, and arrowy lights glittered over it. The yachts were softly dipping up and down. The shore on the opposite side of the narrow bit of water separating West from East Cowes, was greener than green itself. An old man came to the edge of the stone esplanade, and flung in his net for the first time that day, waiting with a vacant patience to draw it up again. Clemence could not help waiting and watching too, until he dragged it up, filled with little white, shining, wriggling denizens of the sea, which he shook roughly into his basket.

Some naughty-looking little boys went past, all gabbling together, and hauling along by a clothes-line a wretched cur puppy. She feared, by the exhilaration of their manner, that they were taking it to its death. She wished that she had been dressed ; for then would she not have torn

back her curtains and parleyed with them, and perhaps moved them into freeing it from the clothes-line, and giving it some poor scraps for breakfast!

They went shuffling past, their harsh little voices breaking the divine morning calm in an ugly way.

Clemence, looking at the closed door between her sister's room and hers, hoped that Angela was not angry at having the little room. She would have taken it gladly, if Mrs. Baillie had not arranged it otherwise. Then she turned back, and looked through the Venetians again. How soon would the Brynhilda come, she wondered. *Very* soon after breakfast, she hoped. She knelt down, and gazing up into the sky, felt thankful; she did not say, or even think, any words.

Now the voices of the children made themselves heard through the open window of their nursery next. Splashings were audible too, and infantile objections to cold water.



"It's gone into my mouf! It's nasty; all salt!"

"Good for you, Minna." (Clemence thought she recognized the voices of the ones respectively whom she had petted, and who had made its mamma that present in the envelope.) "'*Plenty* of salt,' doesn't Miss Furness say every day at dinner? Drink some more."

"No, no, *no*!"

"Put the sponge in her mouth, nurse. '*Plenty* of salt,' nurse; that's what Miss Furness says. You don't think Miss Furness tells stories, do you?"

The nurse's words Clemence could not catch. Her voice was not like these little shrill, penetrating ones.

"I will get out now! I will, I *will*!"  
Scream and violent splash. Then silence for a few minutes.

"*Doesn't* it curl worth a penny, nurse? How much ought it to curl worth? A sovereign?"

Clemence turned away from the window, and began leisurely to dress.

When, at a quarter to nine, she went down to the dining-room, she found on the table, in addition to the table-cloth, a dish of those little glistening, white victims that she had watched come flapping up in the net just now. There were bloomy plums, and fragrant raspberries, hot rolls, toast, potatoes à la maître d'hôtel, and apricot jam.

"Oh, Mrs. Baillie! is this your idea of starvation?" she said; "of not getting anything to eat?"

"I never complained of the *fruit*; and jam grows everywhere where there is a grocer; and the fish have just jumped out of the water."

"Of course they have. I have been watching them, poor little things. How they hated the sunshine, and the warm morning air."

"Good-morning," said Angela, entering. "Here is a nice breezy day for Mr. Vane. You may be sure that this morning he is remembering the smoke and all the other disadvantages of a steam-yacht, and re-

joicing in the merits of his own dear Brynhilda."

"Very likely. I hope you feel quite well this morning, Miss Angela; that there are no bad effects from your fainting?"

"Oh, dear, *no*. Pray don't say anything about it. It sounds as if I must have weak nerves; and I don't think I have in the least, except where horses are concerned."

"You would have your wits well about you in an emergency; that I can see."

"No; but I have not. Did you not hear my great delinquency of having knocked down a child when you were at Creyke? My horse was only rearing, and wishing to run away; and the child did not move an inch, although I shouted to her."

"My dear Angela, no one blames you," put in Clemence, earnestly.

"Did not Aunt Maria tell you about it, Mrs. Baillie?" continued Angela, as if her sister had not spoken.

"Yes; I think she did say something about a little girl whom you had accident-

ally knocked down, and that your sister had been extremely kind to her, and had made a sort of protégée of her. She is pretty, is she not, Miss Lawless?"

"Very pretty," answered Clemence; "quite lovely. She interests me very much. I hope she will grow up into a nice, tolerably-educated young woman—educated enough to be a nursery governess. That is what I *hope* for her; but somehow, when I look at her—at her spirited great eyes, and at the quick colour that comes and goes in her cheeks—I feel no dull routine will do for my little Doll. I hope the heat will not prevent my going on with her morning lessons. It is great fun teaching her. The little room at the cottage is so neat now, and the sound of the mill-race is lovely. Do you think that you would recognize the Brynhilda as she sailed in, Mrs. Baillie?"

"There is something odd about the rigging that I think I should know. Here come my babes to say a few words to me before they go for their walk on the green,



and then to their lessons. I hope they will not bore you."

In came the children. A boy of eight, a girl of seven, another of five, and the little one, two or three—either a girl or boy. An impartial observer could by no means tell which; but they could tell it was pretty, and a darling, with its cherub face and golden hair.

"What great eyes she has!" whispered the five-year older to her mother, staring at Angela.

"Like the Wolf in 'Little Red Riding Hood,'" said Angela. "Come here, and I'll eat you up."

The child smiled, understanding the joke, but shrank back against its mamma.

The chief end and aim of the baby was to get at the whistle hanging round its mother's neck, and blow it. (Mrs. Baillie, on hearing the cheerful tidings that there was a breeze, had arrayed herself in marine costume.) Breathing very hard, it clutched and dragged, until Mrs. Baillie pushed it

away, exclaiming, "My baby, you are choking mamma!"

It did not cry, for it was good, but sat down on the floor, holding the toes of its shoes, and looking at the plums with dumb longing.

"May I give it this?" said Clemence, dipping a spoon into the raspberries.

Mrs. Baillie laughed, and said, "Yes."

Clemence sprinkled the raspberries thickly with sugar, and with a smile held it out invitingly to the child, who scrambled up at once, and, going to her, opened its mouth in silence to its widest extent—and it was astonishing how wide that was—like a nestling waiting to be fed.

Before they had left the dining-room, Henry made his appearance; and then, in a few minutes, they all went upstairs to the drawing-room, and Clemence, with a spy-glass, began a watch for the Brynhilda.

Towards eleven o'clock it came. Henry, of course, easily recognized it, for he knew it well. They saw a boat put off to shore,

followed it with their eyes as it came nearer, nearer, until at last it glided up to the slip, and Mr. Vane and Bertie jumped out, looking up, and taking off their hats as they crossed the road, and without ringing, entered the open door and joined their friends on the balcony.

Bertie looked rather unlike himself, for he was in Mr. Vane's clothes ; but he was none the worse for his immersion. Neither was Ruthven, he said. Ruthven had made arrangements for having the Firefly raised, and was on the Brynhilda, although he had been doubtful about coming up to the last moment.

Angela averted her eyes from the greeting between Bertie and Clemence, that, unemotional, of course was a translation of Love's language, sweet to themselves, yet which might be read by on-lookers, and convey no impression to them.

They went out of the house presently, and down to the boat. Mr. Vane sprang in and held out his hand ; Bertie stood on the slip to give his assistance. Mrs. Baillie

and Clemence took their places; Angela came last.

“Can I touch his hand?” she thought;  
“Clemence’s lover’s hand?”

If she had had the power of showing herself up to herself, she would have been frightened then at her own thoughts—at her own feelings. She would have been even frightened at the little shunning movement she made, as her shoulder was on the point of coming in contact with her sister’s. She would have known that the atmosphere of her heart was mephitic, and that all good and gentle thoughts must die in it.

“Mr. Lawless, tell us how you felt when you were run down last night,” said Mrs. Baillie, smiling at Bertie.

“I was sucked under at first, you know,” he answered, in a dispassionate, matter-of-fact way. “The water felt strong, cold, and unfriendly——”

“Don’t!” said Clemence, imploringly; “please don’t. I cannot bear to have a merciful escape like that turned into a bubble topic; I mean a topic like one’s last



new dress, or—the baby hippopotamus.” Poor Clemence! she said that because nothing else was obliging enough to come into the mind that was pre-occupied with Bertie’s escape.

Angela went off into a fit of laughter; violent, uncontrolled, almost hysterical.

Would not Bertie, would not everybody laugh at Clemence as she was doing? They all laughed a little, a very little; but evidently it did not seem to them to call for such an unrestrained show of mirth as she was giving.

She stopped, disappointed, with a sort of sob, and dabbled her ungloved hand in the water, turning away her face.

“A nice fresh day,” observed Mr. Vane, in a flat tone of approbation, and gazing up at the long gray clouds, beginning to stretch across the sky.

“And growing nicer and fresher every minute,” said Henry, in a tone of genuine cool relish.

“Oh, Mr. Vane, have you seen my aunt’s parasol?” asked Angela, suddenly.

“Your aunt’s parasol?” he repeated, withdrawing his gaze from the skies, and fixing it on her face, for enlightenment.

“Yes; she—lent it to me. I do not in the least remember where I had it last; but I thought I might have left it in the boat, or on the deck.”

“I have not seen it, or heard of it; but I’ll ask.”

“Lent it to her!” Henry’s heart that was going into captivity, made another ineffectual struggle for freedom. But that was such a white, mild little fib of hers; and girls *will* be slippery—at least, most girls will be; and when they are dressed in white, are fair and blue-eyed, it is not hard to overlook it.

“Are you a good sailor?” asked Mrs. Baillie of Angela; “*I’m not.*”

“No,” said Angela, her glance wandering over the nautical costume. “Really! I should have fancied that you were. I am a very poor one.”

“There is going to be a capful of wind,”

remarked Mrs. Baillie, "is there not, Mr. Vane?"

"More than there was yesterday," he answered, Jesuitically.

"There was not a doll's teacupful yesterday," said Angela; "so your answer is no answer."

Mrs. Baillie's question was answered practically, and that soon. By the time they had got opposite the boys' school, Angela was beginning to have a line like a white cord around her mouth. And Mrs. Baillie's face was endued with the plaintive *homesick* expression which is the mild forerunner of *mal de mer*. Mr. Ruthven, in his red cap, stood looking at her with a compassion ludicrously disproportioned to an ill whose cure was simply *terra-firma*.

Henry would have looked with equal compassion at Angela, if she had not been too fractious to allow him.

"*I insist* upon your looking the other way," she said, imperiously. "Count the clouds; or no, count one hundred slowly,

and then, if I am still here, you may look at me."

"Thanks," he replied, in his most suave and sad manner; "I think that, instead of annoying you any longer by staying near you, I will go and talk to your sister; she seems to be as bright and fresh as a heather-bell."

Angela turned on him like lightning. "Do count one hundred before you go away and leave me," she said, earnestly; "count two hundred."

"Reprieve me from counting," he answered, "and let me stay. I think I may; for you look much better than you did two or three minutes ago."

"I am better; not quite as bright as a heather-bell, of course; but that I never could hope to be. Heather is dull purple, is it not?"

"There are varieties. I was thinking of the bright delicate pink, when I looked at your sister."

Angela's eyebrows drew together into a real Lawless frown, as she said, slowly,



"There is no doubt about it; I—have lost Aunt Maria's parasol."

"Could I do you any good by sending you down one like it from London?" he asked, filling in the hiatus of her sentence with no suspicions of his own; "I am going directly up from Southampton."

"Are you really not coming to the Vicarage? Must I go alone?"

"Alone? Why, you will have your sister and Bertie."

"I won't go in the carriage with them," she cried, in a voice and manner so new to him that he stared at her in astonishment.

"They shall go in one compartment, and I shall go in another," she added, changing her tone, laughing, and trying to make a joke of it. But it was not subtly enough done; Henry had an uneasy sense of her speaking to him from behind a mask, as it were.

"You are a puzzling young lady," he said; then, suddenly, "By-the-way, why did you so distinctly give me to understand

that you had appropriated Bertie, when it was your sister who had done so? It was to make me go through jealous evolutions for your amusement, perhaps, that you said what you did, eh?"

"What *did* I say?" replied Angela, trying to laugh, to speak lightly, to look coquettish, and having only as the result of the endeavour, three dismal failures; perceptible to him, and of which she herself was conscious. The laugh, the voice, the look, were as badly done as by a young actress struck with stage fright. In truth, Angela felt shamed through all her nature to have betrayed herself as she had. It seemed to her that a horrid crop of the weeds of ill-natured gossip must be springing up in the neighbourhood round about Creyke, the seeds of which she herself had sown. The thought was a cankerous one. Arrived at Southampton, there was a complete severance of the party. Mrs. Baillie went to meet her husband, who had gone to Southampton early that morning. Mr. Ruthven accompanied her, while Vane

went with the others to the train, where he saw the sisters and Bertie safely in.

“Do buy me a book,” said Angela to Henry, out of the window, and speaking in a tone of eager hurry. “A newspaper—anything.”

He rushed off, obediently, returning out of breath, with a small volume which he could only place in her hand by running along the platform with the already moving train.

She made him a slight motion of thanks, and, opening it, buried her shoulders in the corner, and her attention in the book. Her face wore such a look of aloofness and determination to be silent, that Clemence and Bertie were prudent and considerate enough to leave her alone.

“Why—did—you—so—distinct—ly—give—me—to—un—derstand—that—you—had—ap—pro—pri—a—ted—Bert—ie, when—it—was—your—sis—ter—who—had—done—so?” said the clink clank of the train, with a deadly wearying repetition. It insisted on it; she could make it

frame no other words. It hammered them out monotonously. What were the printed ones before her, while those others were being dinned into her ears? She did not see them. The others even drowned what Bertie was saying to Clemence—who had appropriated him. There was but one station that they stopped at between Southampton and Barport. With a sense of relief, when those tormenting wheels were for a few moments still, Angela gave her eyes visual power (we all know how it is possible to stare at clear print until the letters are blurred and undecipherable), and took in the words on the page before her. But those other words were between the lines! It was useless to try and escape from them.

She was thankful when at last they reached Barport. Had it really been but three-quarters of an hour since they left Southampton? Southampton, Cowes, Ryde, and the yacht, seemed to have retreated very far into the past, because of the Sahara of painful and unprofitable thought



lying between the present moment and them.

As the train stopped, Bertie stepped past her, and opening the door, got out ; extending his hand to help her.

“ I cannot touch your hand,” she breathed out, as she passed by him, alighting without his assistance, and walking towards the waggonette, which he had been thoughtful enough to telegraph for, from Ryde.

“ Do you feel quite recovered from the effect of your tossing ?” asked Clemence, timidly, of her sister. “ I would not speak to you in the train, for fear——”

“ Fear of what ?” said Angela, impatiently, as she paused, in hesitation.

“ For fear of disturbing you.”

“ Why don’t you speak out ? You know that you meant to say—you know that you want to say—for fear I should be cross. I hate euphem—— whatever the word is.”

“ I did not want to say it ; I did not want to say it. I do not think I meant it. You—you make me feel quite bewildered when you turn upon me so !”

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Angela made no reply ; averting her head, and looking coldly out over the meadows starred with blooms ; over the hedges prickly with thorns, and beaded with berries ; over the crofts near thrifty homes, where children were playing together, the powerful sun bleaching their hair and browning their faces ; little brothers and sisters shouting, and running and calling to each other, all shouting together ; nobody listening, not even that poor dependent, the nondescript dog at their heels, for he was barking lustily. The sun was hot, but the wind blew cool. The brook was listing the same song that it had been singing ever since it was born ; and the tremulous willow branches bent to listen to it. The pretty little dun cows stared over the hedges at the waggonette with their large peaceable eyes ; their jaws moving, and their tails giving a languid whisk. The thrush swaying high up in air on some flexible small branch, as he swung backwards and forwards, sang out his love of

his little life, and of the sunshine that God sent to gild it.

Leaving Angela to her own thoughts—since she seemed unwilling to have the thoughts of others intruded on her—Bertie and Clemence talked together, until, at last, she volunteered a remark. It was only,

“I am going to get out, and walk the rest of the way home. Stop, John.”

She alighted in silence. Bertie did not offer to help her. They drove on through the park; but they could not refrain from turning to look at her, as she walked slowly along in her white dress and her sailor hat.

“Miserable, isn’t it?” said Clemence.

“Time will make it all right,” he answered, with some brevity.

“Oh, if it only will!” said Clemence, with a sigh. “If I could only get at what she is thinking—what she is feeling! When I try in my unartistic way to reach the real Angela, she does so evade me, and put me off, and puzzle me. She *will not* let me find her out. Not that I think there

is anything in the world to find out, but that her vanity is wounded," she added quickly, too proud for her sister to let him suppose that Angela—her proud, bonnie Angela—was made to suffer by him, or that she begrudged any woman her lover.

He did not answer. He disliked the subject, beyond any subject. He winced at the most distant allusion to it. It was always with him that disagreeable first thought that jumps into one's empty brain in the morning, before other more cheerful ones elbow it out. Before the brain is active enough to shape real, pleasant thoughts, this immature intruder, whose name is "What is it?" glides in. Whoever is without him, is fortunate indeed. Bertie's morning "What is it?" was a dim wrong that he had done—"to Angela," came afterwards. Then his mind would fully awake, and he would remember Clemence, and his happy love, and his approaching marriage; the first half-thought would get jostled out, and by the time he had begun



to dress, he probably would be whistling like a bob-o'-link.

Clemence, who had a loving tact, said no more; but after first looking up at John's chuffy old back, shyly put out her hand and clasped her cousin's. "Bertie," she said, "tell *me* how you felt when the horrid cold water closed over you. Were you frightened? What did you think of? I did not want you to tell before those laughing people in the boat, but I want you very much to tell me seriously."

"I am too strong a swimmer to have felt a bit frightened, and I thought, 'By Jove! there's Clemence on the pier, and she'll see this little performance, and be in a great state of mind!'"

"Was that all you thought?"

"All! Are you not satisfied with it? It was you of whom I thought."

"Yes, yes, that was nice; but I should have imagined that something more solemn—you know, Bertie. For you might have been drowned; you might have been run down by the packet-boat."

“Yes; for one instant that occurred to me——”

“So it did to Angela.”

“Did it? Ha! She calculated my chances, I dare say. Perhaps you thought something ‘solemn’ for me, Clemence?”

“I did; oh, I did, indeed!”

He pressed her hand, and stroked it.

“I saw Ruthven’s red cap bobbing about, but he was a good many yards away from me, and spluttering, and blowing, and shouting in a very exhausting way. It was odd; I was just saying, ‘Look here, Ruthven, will you be my best man?’ when bang, crash, the packet came—a sort of crunch like having all one’s teeth drawn—and then there was that unpleasant suction, that one could not fight against.”

“Oh, Bertie! I am not superstitious, but I do feel sorry that you were saying that to him. I wish it had been almost anything else. Do *you* mind? Does it give *you* any feeling of foreboding?”

“Not a bit, darling,” he answered, laughing. “I am sorry that I told you if it is

going to worry you ; but I thought there was none of that nonsense about you."

"*I* thought not, too," she answered ; but she did not speak cheerily.

"Isn't it fortunate—for me, not for poor Ruthven—that this happened now, instead of while I owned the Firefly ? I should have been in a dilemma. It is not very happy for Ruthven, but it is ten times better for him than for me."

"Yes," said Clemence, absently, "it is. And is he going to be ?"

"Going to be what ?"

"Your best man ?"

"He has not answered that question yet—or it was only half a question ; the last half was quashed. He will be my best man, of course ; and a very ornamental one, eh ?"

"I suppose so. I don't like dark men with straight black hair."

"We'll get him to have it curled with hot tongs on that day ; and if it is a damp morning, defer the ceremony for his sake until the weather is dry. With his hair

curled, and a lavender neck-tie, and a large white flower in his coat, Ruthven will grace the occasion."

"A pain like a knife ran through my heart when he jumped out of the boat, and not you. What a startling object he was, now that I think of it! His hair lay sleek and glittering like jet in the lamp-light; the pointed end and tassel of his scarlet cap, heavy with water, almost touched his shoulder; his eyes were as wild and bright as a Canadian pony's; but, my Bertie, you looked just like your own every-day self when you came up. *Your* hair has a tendency to curl, and though it was very sleek, it did not make your head look like the head of a seal, as his did."

Bertie gave a slight, flattered laugh.

"I did want you on that balcony of the Baillies'; it was such a lovely night! Did you not think so?"

"Yes; very warm and still, and full of the scent of leaves and flowers from the land. I wished myself at Cowes a great deal more heartily than you could possibly



have wished for me. Who were there? Any men beside Henry and Baillie?"

"No; no one but ourselves. I played *béziq*ue with Mr. and Mrs. Baillie, and Angela and Captain North sat on the balcony; afterwards, I went out, and stayed until Mrs. Baillie made me come in and sing."

"Why, I thought you hated *béziq*ue."

"I am rather an enemy to it: but not when it is amusing to a kind friend, who provides me, not only with meat, drink, and shelter, but with an ivory hair-brush, and a dressing-gown trimmed with Valenciennes lace and pink bows, and fairy slippers three times too small for me, and a beautiful Bible with a clasp so new and stiff that I could hardly open it, and offers to lend me her Swiss maid."

"She is rather a nice little thing, Mrs. Baillie, isn't she?"

"I think after the pleasant speeches and pretty ways and glances she spent on you, that you might say something rather warmer of her than that," said Clemence, laughing.

“ I did not notice any pleasant ways about her.”

“ Then you must be blind.”

“ No I was not ; I was probably looking at you.”

“ Watching me sun-burn. Am I very much burnt ?”

He looked into the glowing face, over which a warm nut-brown tint had stolen.

With his cheek nearly touching hers, he said, “ If you are, I like it.”

They found Angela seated in the morning-room with her aunt. She had taken off her hat, and placed herself in a draught ; the air was ruffling her fair hair, and stirring the ends of her ribbons and laces.

“ You got my telegram from Cowes, Aunt Maria ?” said Clemence.

“ Yes. Angela has been telling me of the accident to the Firefly. I am thankful to see you safe and sound, Bertie.”

“ Thank you ; I am glad, too, that the end of the world has not come for me.”

“ If Angela has told you all about it, there is nothing left for me to tell,” said

Clemence. "You should have heard Mrs. Baillie's description to her husband."

"Comparisons are odious," said Angela; "that is as much as to say that mine was not worth hearing."

"No, it is not. You tell things just as vividly as Mrs. Baillie possibly could."

"I don't want flattery."

"You don't seem to want anything in life," said Clemence, half-pathetically, half-drolly.

"Yes, I want two things—love and money."

"The two very hardest things to get, and to keep," said Clemence.

"Trite, as usual," murmured Angela.

They all thought that she said, "*Right*, as usual;" and Clemence looked quite pleased at the commendation from her sister, and fixing her "maiden eyes divine" on her, tried to think of something very nice and suitable to say, which should not be flattery, and yet should flatter, or rather please. Of course, the very effort frightened away everything agreeable and desired; and

Angela looked particularly frigid and listless, as if it would take something striking to rouse her into warmth and animation.

Miss Lawless had been sawing a thin slice of wood into an elaborate pattern of twists and scrolls, for a bracket. She had paused on Angela's coming in, conversation and her sawing not being feasible at the same time.


She wistfully eyed that half-finished curly cue, where the saw still hung invitingly. She could not resist taking hold of it, and gently following the black line of her pattern. Who could think of anything pretty to say with that grating noise in their ears. This seemed the very work for Miss Lawless; it had not the engaging femininity of sewing, and yet it was perfectly lady-like. It required no artistic skill, and yet it was a distant relation of Art; it was no fal-lal out of a Berlin-wool shop, but substantial wood, bought at the joiners'; and the noise said in the plainest possible way, "Miss Lawless is engaged in an interesting and agreeable occupation, in which she



must on no account be disturbed." Angela got up and vanished from the room. Presently Clemence did the same; Bertie followed. Miss Lawless, with the August sunshine shut out, but for spears and dots of gold lying on the floor, drowned the gurgling notes of the wild-birds outside with her saw, and knit her brows, and twisted her mouth over the perplexities of her pattern.

## CHAPTER VII.

A POET'S HEART VEXED : A COMMISSION  
EXECUTED.

 HE wind that had been blustering all day was raving now. It was guillotining the weaker flowers, and making the lilies, on their tall strong stalks, "rock their white heads, like mourners." It was carpeting the rose-walk with rose-leaves, and tossing the birds in their nests roughly, and making of white curtains at open windows, swaying ghosts to frighten nervous children. The bats were almost forced to fly straight by it, and the owls had to battle against it. It was a warm wind, full of dampness, and now and then sweeping great plashing drops of rain

with it. It was misery to have the windows shut against it, and discomfort to have them opened to it.

They all sat at Creyke with them shut, except a bit of one on the side away from the wind. The large porcelain lamp was lighted, and shaded ; and the silky smell of the old damask and Miss Lawless's eau de Cologne fought together. Mr. Lawless had come up in his rusty black suit, and was making a few uncomplimentary remarks about his bailiff. They were all there but Fox. Nobody was doing anything. Every one, to judge by the isolated remarks made on different subjects, was pursuing a separate train of thought—which is one of the privileges of a family circle.

“Dilly-dally ; shilly-shally—none of that ‘Look sharp, my man, and be up to time,’ that one wants. No—ha—a rattle-headed, slipshod way about him,” said Mr. Lawless.

A pause.

“I cannot find my walking-stick parasol

anywhere, nor can Parkin," said Miss Lawless.

"Why, you lent it to Angela," returned Clemence, breaking away from her train of thought.

"Lent it to Angela!" repeated Miss Lawless, slowly, each word coming out in splints.

Angela gave her sister a funny little look.

"How stupid I am!" said Clemence, understanding in a moment, for had not Angela "borrowed" things from her all her life? "I did not mean that in the least, Aunt Maria; I was thinking of something else. Has Parkin looked in that three-cornered cupboard of yours? It is a distracting cupboard; so dark——"

"Lent it to Angela!" said Miss Lawless again, ignoring Clemence's after words. "No, certainly not; Angela has parasols of her own, has she not?"

"Plenty," replied Angela for herself. "Yours will come to light, Aunt Maria, be sure. Clemence misunderstood something



that I said about Mrs. Baillie lending me something. She had to lend us everything, Aunt Maria, but tooth-brushes. It was so amusing, and she has such funny little children; you ought to see them——”

“Will you ring the bell for me, Bertie?” said Miss Lawless.

“How glad I am I’d sold her,” remarked Bertie at large, as he rose and complied. “The raising her alone, is going to be a bill of cost to Ruthven.”

“Will you ask Mrs. Parkin to come here?” said Miss Lawless to the servant who answered the bell. Mrs. Parkin came, and was told to look again in the corner-cupboard, and at once, for the missing parasol.

The warm, wild wind thrashed the passion-flower against the window-pane, and made dree noises, as it swept along over the terraces, and round the corners, and among the gables.

“I am glad that I am not on a yacht,” exclaimed Angela; and, rising, lit a candle and carried it to a distant table nearer the

open window, where she established herself with the "Saint's Tragedy." She did not look unlike a tragical saint herself, in her white gown, and great glittering jet cross, that rose and fell with each respiration, her white face with its sharply defined features, her long brown eyelashes, and gold-tinted hair.

Clemence went to the piano and began to sing. Bertie followed her, and leaned over her. Angela raised her long eyelashes, looked at the pair for a moment, then dropped them again, and read one page of the "Saint's Tragedy" three times—her mind stumbling over each word, like a man who tries to walk, looking back over his shoulder all the time.

A strong draught, as the door was opened, nearly blew her candle out. She looked up with a little frown, and saw that it was Fox she was frowning at. He entered with a slightly conscious look; Skip was behind him, and in his own free hand he carried some papers. He went over to Angela at once, and seated himself

at the little table opposite her, and, leaning his elbows on it, made a shade for his eyes with both hands, and from under it looked straight into her face.

“Well,” she said, looking up suddenly, “what is it?”

“I want to read something to you, Angela. May I?”

“Oh, yes, of course you may; I like to be read aloud to.”

“It is—it is something of my own,” said Fox; and his tone gave the impression that it had taken him hours, perhaps days, to screw himself up to this point of acknowledgment and confidence.

“So much the better,” answered Angela, smiling.

“I meant to have asked Clemence. Clemence is kinder than you are; it does not give her pleasure to ridicule people, as it does you. But one can never get her without Bertie, and I should feel too sheepish to read it before him.”

“I can be just as kind as Clemence if I choose,” said Angela, with frosty indig-

nation. "I can be perfectly sweet if I like ; it's all a matter of will and inclination. Go on, Fox, dear. Good heavens ! how you are blushing !"

"It is nice and pretty to blush," he put in, laughing shyly.

"Yes, when you blush the colour of a pomegranate it may be ; but not when you blush the colour of a flower-pot," said Angela.

"This is your idea of being sweet, is it ?" he retorted.

Angela bit her lip.

"Clemence never would have said that," he continued.

"How do you know ?" said she, angrily. "It is insufferable to be told that one does something that some one else '*never* would have done : ' it is just one of those sketchy things people say to be disagreeable. Clemence can be hateful, and is hateful sometimes. But it is easier for her not to be ; she is not at all quarrelsome ; she never was, from a child."

"That is a good hearing for Bertie.



Do you know, Angela, ever so long ago, when you first came, I thought Bertie was going to be sweet on you. *Going* to be, mind you, not *was*——”

“Stop!” cried Angela, putting her hands over her ears, while the blue phosphorescent light of anger came into her eyes. “Don’t irritate me by saying such a thing as that; I hate such nonsense. Nothing you could say could annoy me more. It is like being stung by a—wasp : it is odious to me.”

“Why, Angela! what a waste of good words. Of course I will never say anything about it again. You make a silly little speech of great importance, on my word you do. I soon saw how it was going to be with Bertie, I can assure you.”

“Oh, do read what you have written, Fox,” she struck in hastily; “I really want to hear it; I scribble myself sometimes.”

He looked at her inquiringly; she spoke as if she had been running far and fast.

“Begin,” she said, smiling until she knew that her dimples came.

He called Skip up into the chair with

him to give him confidence ; he produced his papers, and fussed over them, and pretended that he had great difficulty in finding the right one ; he dived under the table for a sheet that had nothing written on it ; he had resort to all the expedients of a nervous boy giving his own effusions to a listener, in his own voice, for the first time.

Angela played with her large jet cross, and watched him as she would have watched the interesting efforts of a newly-caged squirrel to regain its liberty, for a moment. Then her gaze became abstracted ; her eyes got a far-away look ; she was busy with her own tormenting thoughts. So busy that she gave a great start when he began suddenly—

“When time is weary and long,  
And a throng  
Of bitter mem’ries peoples the aching brain,  
Then where, where does the heart roam  
But to home ;  
Dearly loved ; to be seen, ah ! never again !  
Never again in the twilight——”

"Oh, stop a moment, Fox; of course you want me to be a critic, don't you? You are reading it to me expecting me to be quite honest and frank, and to tell you everything that strikes me as being wrong?"

Fox muttered something that sounded like "Of course."

"Then, Fox, there is bad grammar there——"

"Bad grammar!"

"Yes; don't you see, you can't say 'bitter memories peoples'——"

"A *throng* of bitter memories," said Fox impatiently; "a noun of multitude."

"Ah, yes, of course," returned Angela, abashed, "do forgive me for being so stupid; and I was attending well to you, indeed I was: go on."

"No, Angela, I will not. You are not sympathetic, and you have not the critical faculty."

"Yes, I am; yes, I have," said Angela, eagerly. "Oh, do read on; you are usually so sweet-tempered, Fox; I thought I could

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say anything to you, and you would not be vexed."

"I am not a bit vexed—I might have known that I would bore you. Clemence is not half so easily bored; I shall wait until I can catch her alone."

"No, no; *me*; read it to me; I am not bored; I promise you that no matter what strikes me as being out of the way, I will not speak."

"But I want you to speak; I am reading it to you, as you just said, wanting your candid opinion. And it is a mere nothing; only three or four verses. I should only be five minutes reading it."

"Then do read it."

"No," said Fox, tenaciously, "I will not tax your patience. Come, Skip, let us go back to the library again."

"You unreasonable boy, go on—is there anything about me in it?"

"Not one word."

"I fancied that perhaps you meant it for me; the thoughts turning to home, you know. You can't mean it for yourself, be-



cause you are at home. Whom do you mean it for?"

"You *are* unsatisfactory. Why should I mean it for anybody? It is merely a trifle tossed off in a moment."

"I could not write verses without meaning them for somebody."

"And the 'somebody' would generally be yourself, eh, Angela?"

"Probably. We are always our own heroes and heroines."

"No, not always. I think that Clemence is not Clemence's heroine; you are her heroine."

The colour mounted to Angela's face; she seemed to have something in her mind ready and waiting to be said, but she left it unsaid.

The wind rushed past the open window full of malice to the flowers which grew in unprotected spots, and not very friendly to the birds in the limber branches of the trees, for the branches were servile to him, and bent, and bowed themselves, and trembled, and creaked, and the little nests were

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rocked with a too violent lullaby. Even the lambs, nestling in the heart of the daisied leas, tried to smuggle themselves away from his rough caresses.

Clemence was trying over a number of songs that had come down to her from London. All those that Bertie liked she laid aside to keep, and those that he did not approve of were tied together to be sent back.

Mr. Lawless and his sister had got out of their separate grooves of thought, and were in one. They were going over ground that had been well broken—Clemence's engagement to Bertie.

Mr. Lawless had a certain set of remarks, which he had made at first, and with slight alterations had used ever since. Miss Lawless had another set to oppose to it.

“ I should not have selected a cousin, a first cousin, and a young woman wanting in that—ha—that very necessary adjunct, a dowry, as a wife for any son of mine ; but if Bertie must and will marry a cousin—tocherless—let it be Clemence. There is

a thriftiness about Clemence which I have observed with satisfaction. I do not think that the *fool's* pleasure of throwing money about would be any pleasure to her. I am very far from saying that I *like* the match ; but—ha—my strongest objections, if I made any, would be over-ruled. Cutting a son adrift—the melodramatic expedient of incensed fathers—is not one that I should ever have resort to. Cutting a son adrift is sending him into a quagmire of debt—is getting him entangled in a net of notes of hand and post-obits. No, no ; I suppose that we cannot expect our children to be too good for their generation. I should be reluctant to raise active objections ; and Clemence is a fine girl, lovable, an admirable sister, a cheerful temperament, not overweeningly fond of dress, not going along at full speed with the follies of the age.”

“ I saw how it was going to be before they had been here two days. I knew that something of this sort would happen. But it seemed to me at first that it was more likely to be Angela.”

“ More likely to be Angela.”

The words, uttered in her aunt's forcible voice and measured accent, reached Angela, piling Pelion on Ossa ; she knew perfectly well what was meant. Of course every one wondered why Bertie had chosen Clemence. Could they do otherwise if they had seen her fair face and golden hair ? she asked herself.

“ I am going ; good-night,” said Fox, prepared in his own mind to stay and read his verses, if she asked him earnestly so to do.

“ Good-night,” she answered, in an uninterested voice, and not even taking the trouble to look at him.

He went away hurt, not huffed ; he was too gentle and sweet-natured to be resentful, and going back to the library, sat down before his writing-table, and leaning his head on his slender hands, whispered to himself, “ I will write something that she shall listen to—I will, I will !”

When Angela got into her own room that night she sat down and indited a short note.



“Dear Captain North,” it ran. “On the yacht this morning you were kind enough to ask me if you could help me about my aunt’s lost parasol. I do not think I answered you, at least I do not remember doing so ; but I hope you will not consider me very troublesome if I ask you to get me one exactly like it, if you can. I believe I have heard Aunt Maria say that she usually gets her umbrellas and parasols at Sangster’s. Make as good a bargain for me as you can, please, and if you are coming down to spend Sunday at home, bring the parasol with you.

“Yours sincerely,

“A. A. LAWLESS.

“Creyke Park, Aug. —.”

Henry had not intended going down on Saturday, but this note decided him to go. He directly got his short leave, and ran up to London on Saturday morning, all the way from the station to Sangster’s, closing his eyes at intervals, to conjure up a distinct mental picture of the lost parasol.

Miss Lawless, probably, had purchased hers at Sangster's, for Henry got its twin brother, and went away with it, highly satisfied.

His mother watched him alight from the fly, his long white box following him, in the hands of the servant.

"Well, Henry?" she said, inquiringly, as he entered the room where she was, and holding out her kind, white hand to him.

"I am afraid that you think I have brought you a present," he said, in a regretful voice as he kissed her; "that lady-like box does look like it; it is for Miss Angela Lawless. She borrowed her aunt's parasol and lost it, and wrote up for me to get her another like it."

"Of course I thought it was for me," answered Mrs. North, laughing. "I hardly expected you to-day, Henry, you have had so much leave lately."

"But only for a day or two at a time, you know. I did not intend coming down; having this commission given me, decided me to come."

“ I am afraid that any little words of Miss Angela’s are beginning to be very decisive words to you, my Henry.”

“ Why do you say you are ‘afraid ?’ I thought that you liked her so much.”

“ I do. She is a fascinating sort of creature. I suppose I should say ‘afraid,’ in speaking of any girl who swayed you, and had power over you. Angela has had a very moping way about her lately ; have you noticed it ?”

“ Yes. It is the climate ; after Canada, you know. She says so herself. Here is the carriage, mother ; take her to drive, and bring her back to tea.”

“ I will, if she has not already gone out for a walk ; two or three times I have called for her, and she has been out walking.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HENRY SEES DOLL.

**H**ENRY helped his mother into her little low carriage, and watched her drive down the trim approach and out of the pretty brown gate.

Henry loved his quiet home ; full of that atmosphere of peace and refinement, and sober charm that is wrought by good, and gentle, and refined people ; and he adored his mother. Her tender domination had never roused one angry or rebellious feeling in him since his childhood. When sternness had been required in his unruly boyish moments, the mother had fallen back, and the father, firm as he was kind,



had stepped forward, and where suasion would not answer, authority was made to be strongly felt, and submission was the quick result.

Having watched his mother's little black lace bonnet, and graceful, cashmere clothed shoulders, until they were out of sight, he turned round on one heel, and glanced up at the familiar house, to see how the climbing vines and roses looked. The roses had suffered from the gale of a night or two ago, but there was still a profusion of them ; white, deep red, salmon-coloured, yellow, they glowed against the gray stone.

He saw a housemaid come and throw open the window of his own room, and make some final arrangements in it. It seemed too beautiful a day to be under a roof ; he knew that on Saturday afternoon his father was always busy in his study, and must on no account be disturbed until dinner-time. Should he go a-fishing for an hour or two, until his mother returned ? It

seemed the best way of getting rid of time. He got his rod, flies, and other appurtenances, and sending for the gardener's boy, went away to the stream ; going on, and on, until he was astonished to find himself just above the mill : he had walked over a mile then ; it had not seemed so far.

The fish did not seem to care much for Henry's flies, and he was quite provoked with them for not liking the impossible little hairy monsters which he had selected with such care at a great emporium in town.

In disgust he unjointed his rod, and leaving it for Tommy Marks to pack away and carry, strolled onwards alone. He was opposite the mill now ; he paused to listen to the noisy rush and whirr of water and wheel. He stood before a gate hanging on one hinge, and the gate belonged to a low small cottage. There was a child, or young girl, sitting in the doorway, and as she moved to get a better look at Henry, Henry was attracted to her, and saw almost

the prettiest face he had ever seen. In a moment it flashed on him who it was, it was the little girl who had been hurt by Angela's horse. It would be rather a pretty thing to do, to exchange a few words with her, he thought.

He saw that he had caught her eye, and nodded to her.

"Are you better?" he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Quite well?"

"Yes, sir."

"You had a lucky escape. You had not time to get out of the way, had you?"

"No, sir."

"It was a bad accident; I am glad that you are able to be about again."

"Oh, I've been up and about for a goodish bit thank you, kindly, sir."

"For how long?"

"A goodish bit. I can't exactly remember for how long."

"You don't go to the blue school?"

"No," said Doll, with a frown that

almost seemed to draw her eyes nearer together. "Not I."

Henry smiled.

"Nice neat-looking little girls, they are."

"That they are—poor things!"

"What!" said Henry, "are you sorry for them because they look clean and trim?"

Doll blushed, and her glance grew shy and frightened as she averted it from him, and, without speaking, looked over at the osiers that grew down by the gate.

"But you can read," said Henry, in his low, clear voice, "and very well, too, I dare say, for you have a book now there with you."

"Oh, yes! I can read; I went to the National for a bit. Miss Lawless have learnt me how better since, too."

"Ah! And I suppose when you get quite strong again, you will go to the National School for a while longer?"

"No," replied Doll, with a conscious



look and positive tone ; “never—never any more. My schooling’s done.”

Henry gave a slight, pleasant laugh. “Good-day to you,” he said kindly, and beginning to move away.

“Good-day, sir,” responded she, getting up, and making him a curtsy.

He went over the causeway, past the mill-door, where a floury cat sat, in a cat’s hunched position, on the top of the half-door, and took his way homewards on the opposite side of the stream.

He found his mother returned, and, to his great joy, Angela was with her. They were sitting in the pretty, artistically-arranged drawing-room, having tea.

“Where have you been ?” asked Mrs. North.

“Fishing ; and if I had been angling for souls instead of trout, I could not have caught fewer. I was fortunate enough to be able to get a parasol precisely—I think it is precisely—like your aunt’s.”

“It is very kind of you,” said Angela.

“I so hated to trouble you; but Aunt Maria has been a sort of Bo-Peep about that parasol, regretting its loss bitterly, and wondering over it; and I have assured her all the time that it would ‘come home’—be found—and I felt I must make good my words. I’ll never borrow anything of her again—*never*! Now how am I to manage? I must hide it, of course; but I must not be the one to find it. Parkin must be made to find it; and stratagem must be used to make Parkin find it.”

“But why?” asked Mrs. North, surprised. “Why do you not merely give it to your aunt, and say that, as you have not been able to find it, you have replaced it?”

Angela blushed a little, and hesitated. Mrs. North understood in a moment that the word “borrow” was an euphemism, and was sorry to find that her pretty young friend could stoop to the petty trickeries which help to make woman a sharer with Pussy in Pussy’s unenviable feline reputa-

tion. It provoked Mrs. North that her boy had been troubling himself to help Angela in her unsuccessful slyness ; but of course, for her right hand, she would not have shown it.

There was a pause, that Henry broke by saying, " I saw the little girl who was hurt, just now—Dolly Drake ; she was sitting in her doorway. I had a little chat with her ; she is a nice-looking little thing. She spoke of your sister ; she said something about her having taught her to read better."

" She has been a great amusement to Clemence. Clemence always had a fancy for being a sort of ' guide, philosopher, and friend,' to small, poor girls. I would have gone to see the child myself often, but for knowing two things—one, that it would interfere with Clemence ; the other, that Doll would hate the sight of me because I was the unfortunate cause of making her suffer so. But I am going, now that she is nearly well."

“You will be your sister’s bride’s-maid, I suppose,” said Mrs. North.

“I suppose so,” answered Angela, faintly, and a sort of weary, helpless, heart-sick look stole over her face.

“I am sorry that I could not promise Bertie to be his best man,” said Henry; “but it seems so likely that I should at that time be on my way to India, that I could not.”

He looked at her keenly, hoping that she would look sorrowful, even if only a little, at this news.

Angela’s face had quickly regained its customary expression of cold calm, and at Henry’s words she raised her eyes from her tea-cup, and regarded him for an instant. There was some sorrow for him apparent in her countenance, but none for herself.

“That is rather a bore for you, is it not?” she said. “But perhaps you want to go?” (As an after-thought.)

“I do not, indeed. The most thrilling



adventures with tigers that I may go and have ; also the most captivating accounts of ‘ tiffin ’ and ‘ chotahasseri,’ and hunting antelopes with cheetahs, fail to stir in me any desire for India.”

Angela made some light reply, and Mrs. North mused on the insufficiency of mother-love—long-enduring, tender, self-immolating—to satisfy heart-hunger for another love that would probably be selfish, and perhaps would be exacting, short-lived, and without deep root. The mother-love would never swerve away to other objects of affection, and would only grow cold when the heart where its home was, was cold too. This Angela Lawless love might be as easily blown about as a little wind-flower ; or, hot at first, grow cold and hard as lava, or torment by jealous exactions, or torture by faithlessness.

The thread of her thoughts was broken by one of the subjects of them exclaiming—

“ Here are Clemence and Aunt Maria ! ”

And in a moment Miss Lawless and Clemence entered; they had come to pay Mrs. North a visit, and purposed walking home, as the heat of the day would then be over.

Miss Lawless came crackling forward. Her dresses never hung, and drooped, and swept, as graceful women's do; they always seemed buoyed out by some mysterious agency. They reminded one of the doll pin-cushions that are sold at fancy fairs. The skirts of the doll are stuffed full of cotton wool, and it is in them that the pins are to be stuck. Miss Lawless's skirts presented the same appearance; it seemed as if they could have been stuck full of daggers, as the doll pincushion is of pins.

"You are here, Angela?" said she to her niece. "I thought you were gone on your usual sketching expedition."

"I was just starting, when Mrs. North came, and I went with her instead," answered Angela.

"And you have your sketch-book with

you," said Henry; "pray, let me look at it?"

"No, no!" cried Angela, snatching it up; "it is a private record of failure—nobody must look at it."

"Failures are just as interesting as successes. Do let me look at it?"

"No," said Angela, resolutely. "I have not a talent for drawing; I only have a taste for it."

"A great deal that is pretty may be done even without talent," he rejoined.

"Do you think so? Well, the failure of many makes conspicuous the success of one, and the poorness of one person's small gift makes the richness of his neighbour's seem richer."

"Bad for the person, and nice for the neighbour," said Henry.

Clemence, coming over, ventured to join in the conversation, leaving Miss Lawless and Mrs. North to a conventional display of clashing qualities; for no two women were ever more widely different.

Clemence's words, simple and commonplace though they were, often seemed to leaven the conversations in which she took part. In her there was no ill-concealed bitterness; no foolish feminine tilting with windmill prejudices and theories; no vanity that was for ever seeking admiration; no envious frivolity chattering of its own poor nothings, and with a spice of spitefulness of those of its neighbours. She grudged no one anything, and—rare gift—could rejoice as earnestly with those who rejoice, as she could mourn sympathetically with those that mourned.

Before the Lawlesses went, Mr. North came into the drawing-room for a few minutes, and after they had gone he stood at the window for a moment watching them.

Angela and Henry walked on in front, Miss Lawless and Clemence following more slowly.

“The younger one is a very pretty girl,” he said, turning and speaking to his wife.

“Yes,” she answered, a little grudgingly;



“but there is something in her face that is very unsatisfactory ; she looks as if she could not love sincerely ; as if the tendrils of her heart clasped nothing, but ramped on the ground.”

“You do not often choose such flowery language, Alice,” said the vicar, smiling.

“I am going to be more flowery still ; for I am going to tell you what I thought of Clemence Lawless as I watched her just now, and listened to her, *through* her aunt’s cold mist of small-talk. She made me think of a sweet old-fashioned flower growing in a sheltered garden nook, not fit for a flower-show or a ball-room bouquet, but a darling bloom nevertheless, full of scent and bright comeliness.”

“I like them both—both the sisters,” said the vicar ; “I have liked them from the first. I am sure that I am not mistaken in thinking that Miss Angela looked pale and listless. I am sorry to see it. I like to see young people look as if they were enjoying their youth.”

Mrs. North laughed. "My dear, your own son looks as if youth were a punishment and life a delusion, although he enjoys both in his heart."

"I like Henry's expression; faces that always seem to have a joke written on them, are not at all to my taste."

"Nor to mine," replied his wife. "I have never admired what were called 'laughing eyes'—eyes that are always full of mischievous glitter and twinkle. They are very heartless; the owners of them would be sure to say that 'they don't know why it is, but they never can help laughing when they see anybody fall down!' You have heard people say that? You may be certain they had the popular 'laughing eye.'"

And on this Mrs. North went upstairs to take off her bonnet.


The good vicar, going out, paced slowly up and down his trim gravelled path, between his laurels, and his fuchsias and hydrangeas, and rose bushes.

Henry, on his return, found him still there, and linking his arm in his father's, walked up and down with him, until they were called in to dinner. He recounted the whole episode of the poor Firefly, and found time to speak of other things in that saunter to and fro; but he did not touch on the one nearest to his heart.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A FATAL INTERVIEW.

“Flaring August’s here ;  
September’s coming ! Summer’s broidered shroud  
Is borne away in triumph by the year :  
Red Autumn drops, from all his branches bow’d,  
His careless wealth upon the costly bier.”

UGUST had passed—the core  
and kernel of the year. Golden  
and gaudy, yet sad too, for  
Summer was dying ; one could see that, in  
the hectic tint of leaf, and sky, and flower.  
August had passed, and September was  
come.

To Angela, each of those hours filled  
with the pomp of colour that early autumn  
brings, seemed a day of itself. The wo-



man's "half-loaf"—love from the wrong man—was hers; and to torment him (Henry North) gave her at times some satisfaction and amusement. But everything was flavoured with rue to her.

It was a month full of hot, wild weather; thunderstorms were frequent, and strong winds, that spoilt the flowers, and sometimes broke and split the branches of the trees.

Restless and unhappy, Angela was never prevented by breathless heat, or the sulphurous stagnation of atmosphere that betokened a coming storm, from wandering out into the glare, or the warning murkiness, in search of a place not made with hands, where the roof was branches, and the floor moss; where there were no clocks to tick at her with measured words in their tick; no pictures to irritate her by their painted smiles, or the smiling beauty of their sunny landscapes; no Clemence to torment her with a face that was a happy one—notwithstanding that it had a look of

broken peace—and with a voice full of prayer for the old love again from her only sister, whenever she spoke to that only sister.

One day—a model day—warm and still, golden in the sunshine, and pearly gray in the shade, Angela went forth as usual, with the unfailing sketch-book, which showed upon its pages convulsed landscapes, and deformed trees without number.

She walked long and far, past combe and dingle, where tangled vines and brake crept and climbed, and where the traveller's joy bloomed, and the yellow vetch, and cow-wheat, and red-rattle. Past homesteads and cottages gay with autumn flowers she went along, her veiled head drooping, her white gown trailing behind her, and the September sun beating down on her black parasol.

The blackberries were beginning to ripen in the hedgerows; the fragile dog-roses had been given the day sufficient to them, and were now gone; the grass was dry and

dull. Occasionally the sound of the sportsman's gun was to be heard.

She walked by the side of the tall hedge, thinking, with almost the one ideal intensity of a monomaniac, upon the humiliation and bitterly-defeated expectation that had befallen her. As she recalled, for the innumerable time, what she had been fool enough to say to Clemence, and to Henry North, she bit her lip until it bled, and muttered some ill-sounding word to herself, and of herself. She plunged into a small, yet tolerably dense, wood, lying a little off from the quiet lane. A haunt of hers this wood was—so familiar to her, that the thread of her bitter musings was not broken as she pushed her way through the tall ferns, and the underbrush, and sank down at the foot of a birch, and threw back her veil. Times like this were the only moments of comfort or reprieve that she knew.

She began sketching a tree that stood opposite her; for she was determined to

have ostensibly a definite motive for her lonely walks.

Unfortunate tree! You would have hidden your diminished head, and shed leafy tears of humiliation could you have seen the pencilled representation of yourself which disfigured one page of Angela's sketch-book.

With a final, contemptuous glance at her handiwork, Angela rose to her feet, and looking at her black wooden watch, found that it was half-past six o'clock. Accordingly, gathering up the pencil-box, india-rubber, and pen-knife that comprised her small artistic properties, she began walking towards home.

She was soon in the lane again. It was deserted. Only a ratty, grass-grown "no thoroughfare," between tall, ragged hedges. She was glad that it was deserted; she grudged a spoken "good-day" to a passing rustic. How different if she had been going to be "the Squire's wife!" she thought.



But was the lane deserted? No; she descried in the distance a figure coming towards her, making, perhaps, for that stile towards which she herself was directing her steps—a stile connecting the lane with meadows, across which was a short cut into the park. Presently she recognized the figure—it was Bertie, returning from shooting, with his gun on his shoulder, and one favourite dog at his heels.

Since that most miserable day of Angela's life, they had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen words together alone. Now, as she watched him nearing her, with his long, swift stride, she felt that to listen to his voice again, and look into his beloved and admired face, with no eyes to mark the sadness of her own, no ears to note the inflections of her voice, or the words she spoke—here, surrounded by the peace and quiet charm of the country, and the dying day—would be a pleasure so keen, that she could not even ask herself to forego it.

She lingered as he approached the stile;

and with her white oval face down bent, and her long lashes defined against her cheek, met him face to face ; and her heart leaped like a thing electrified.

She raised her eyes to his : in hers there was no ill-will—only an asking look ; she seemed begging for kindness of word and tone and look from him ; and he, in his turn, was but too willing to give it. For the sense of the injury that he had inflicted upon her had been almost as great and permanent a sorrow to himself as to her.

Undeniably he was happy in the thought of his approaching marriage, but he imprecated himself when he thought, but for his own fault, how much happier he might have been. And a certain gravity had settled upon him—noticeable inasmuch as it differed from the debonnair and buoyant manner of other days.

Only that morning at breakfast, Mr. Lawless had flung a harpoon of ill-natured wit at his son for the melancholy of his countenance and the gravity of his manner.

Clemence had laughed cheerily, and thrown a peach at him ; but Bertie had allowed the peach to roll away from him on the table, and had maintained silence.

The "inconstant moon," looking pale and attenuated in her crescent blaze, and with the yellow blaze of the sunset making an insufficient background for her, is the sole observer of their interview.

"I have heard the sound of your gun from time to time," said Angela, with a faint smile. "You are a good shot?"

"Yes, I am—pretty well."

"Oh, I know what a man's admission of 'pretty well' means ; then it has not been so very silly after all to wish myself a partridge, as I have been doing every time that I heard the sharp report?"

He looked intensely uncomfortable, and at a loss ; therefore she went on in a lighter tone.

"What a lovely evening," she said ; then, directly after, "That is the best of relations ; you can say the most unalloyed

commonplaces to them, and yet not sink in their estimation or your own ; and, moreover, when you say to your aunt, or your—cousin, ‘What a charming day!’ you are sure really to mean it ; it is no making ‘talkee-talkee,’ it is an expression of honest conviction, and is just as much worth saying as if it were a bit of wit and wisdom.”

“You are not much given to commonplaces, even with relations,” he answered, smiling.

“I try to avoid them,” she answered, simply, “but I do not think I ever succeed in soaring much above them. Why are you not playing croquet at the De Manleys?” she went on abruptly, not quite enough her own mistress to make conversation thoroughly connected.

“Because I hate croquet and the De Manleys ; but let me return the question, and ask why *you* are not there.”

“Because I, too, hate croquet and the De Manleys. I always wish those three effervescent sisters at the Source of the



Nile, when I see their landau coming up the avenue."

"And they think themselves such consummate swells," subjoined he.

"Clemence and Adrian have gone," said Angela, a wave of colour coming and going over her face, betokening with what effort she pronounced her sister's name. "They went with Mrs. North."

"And Henry?"

"Captain North has gone back to Aldershot; he went last evening. Why did not *you* go into the army? You are a model for a light-hearted young Lancer or Hussar. The —th were out in Canada for a long time, you know, and they were the lightest-hearted set of men it is possible to imagine. One drove Esquimaux dogs in a sledge, I remember; and another, who was spending a short leave at an hotel at Niagara Falls, changed all the boots that were left outside the doors one night, and changed them as only an accomplished wag could have done. The same man one

evening at the little theatre (a place so small that you could put it in your hat and not know that it was there), drew a life-like caricature on a great play-bill, of a girl whom he, and everybody else, knew, and who was there at the time, and hung it over his box. There was a tremendous row in consequence."

"Not surprising," said Bertie.

Angela went on talking fast and eagerly, as though dreading a pause.

"He went to a ball once—or, rather, a small dance—and, for a wager with one of his brother officers, entered the room on his head. He had such pretty feet—I can see them now coming in up in the air, in patent-leather shoes, neatly tied, and the thinnest possible stockings, the colour of strawberry ice."

"I should think that his face might have been the colour of strawberry ice, too."

"Oh, dear, no ; for strawberry ice is the faintest pink. His face ! No over-ripe

strawberry was ever redder. He made an apology to his hostess—when he saw her unfeigned indignation—that was pretty enough to have been placed in a young lady's album. He was a really clever and good-hearted fellow, but so mad! I should like to write a book, and call it, 'Reminiscences of Romping Regiments!'

"No doubt it would be an amusing one."

"But, unfortunately, I only could have a reminiscence of one, for I have never known anything of but one."

"Then have it 'A Romping Regiment,'" he said, envying her the ease with which she talked, although her lips were white and trembling.

For his part he found difficulty in replying even, with an air of effortless ease. He could only manage to follow her lead; to originate a remark seemed to him to be beyond his powers.

They had walked on together; she had sprung over the stile without any assistance

from him, and, side by side, they now wended their way across the meadows, and presently entered the park.

“This is all yours, or will be some day,” she said, glancing from right to left.

“Yes,” he answered, mechanically.

“While you and Clemence take life in purple and fine linen, I shall be taking it in serge and darns, for I mean to enter the sisterhood at Clewer.”

“You!” he cried, impulsively; “never was any one more unfit. You shall do nothing of the sort.”

“Who will prevent me?” she asked, with a melancholy smile.

“I will.”

“Have you not made me unhappy enough already?”

“Are you still unhappy?” said he, in tones of most homefelt regret and remorse. “I curse myself for making you so.”

“The harm was done, not by your actions to me, nor your words to me, nor by any-



thing over which you had the slightest control ; you were *yourself* ; and I—I was most unfortunate Angela, whose heart was a rebel. Don't look so miserable, Bertie ; I would rather be made unhappy by you than happy by any one else. Come, let us change the subject. Is your gun loaded ?" and she regarded the weapon with looks of most thoroughly feminine suspicion.

"One barrel, yes," he answered, with an effort, his fair face quite colourless, "and cocked, for I intended firing it off at the rooks on my way home, and on *their* way home."

"You cruel fellow."

"Not at all ; a very good way of getting rid of the charge."

"The rooks will not think so ; however, the great laws of nature are usually cruel. Why should not we, humbly learning from them, be cruel likewise ? One organism, complete and full-lived, falls prey to another in no wise superior to itself. Why do not

we humans who can understand these things, shudder and weep more, and laugh and be amused less? If every sharp pain and hidden wrong were made vocal, the song of the unhurt birds, and the laugh of the innocent ignorant children, and all the happy sounds of the minority that suffer not, would be drowned in the cries of the majority that suffer."

"Do not talk like this, Angela; one does not like to hear a girl talk so."

"Was my mind made to order? Will it ever be in reality older? Will my thoughts ever penetrate deeper to the heart of things? And the heart of everything is hollow. The heart of society is hollow and proud. Do you know what rides the ninth wave? Pride. Hearts may be broken, but Pride must not be. Oh, if my pride could only have remained intact I would have allowed my heart to be broken into a thousand pieces," she went on, abruptly plunging into personalities.

"And is not your pride intact?" he said,

in a voice which was low, and broken with emotion ; so had *her* emotional tones and burning eyes, and pallid trembling lips, and high-flown nonsense, stirred him. The sensations of a man who walks beside a lovely girl whom he has abjured because he loves her not, patent though her charm may be, and by whom he knows himself to be loved, are full of a strange misery.

“ No,” Angela replied to his question ; and into the word were concentrated a plurality of sufferings — self-contempt, jealousy, and the ineradicable fidelity of a hopeless love, which unsought and unrequited, yet refused to perish.

“ I should like to grind myself under my own heel ; and Clemence—I hate Clemence,” she went on in a tone that low, and with no sort of emphasis, yet was terrible as any outpouring of volcanic anger could have been.

“ You grind *me* under your heel by talking in this way,” he said, with the keenest self-reproach. “ It shocks me beyond

measure. It is the sort of thing that I—I—thought never happened," he blundered on.

Angela's eyes became simply blue fire. "I see; you thought that a lady—a Lawless—would have flung herself on the rails, and allowed the South-Western express to reduce her to pulp rather than say what I have said! I see! You are right to feel the extreme of contempt."

"I do not; I do not. Angela!" he exclaimed, halting for a moment, yet not then daring to look above the little ruffle encircling her throat, "what are you?"

"‘A traveller from the cradle to the grave,’ as I told you once before."

"Give me some other answer now."

"No, I will not. You have no right to ask me questions like that, for you can only wish to extort from me some further admission of suffering."

"You misjudge me cruelly," he cried; "it is a true moral bastinado to me to hear you talking as you have been



talking. I hope that you have not meant all that you have said. When I look at your fair girl's face, that has not one line in it, nor one harsh contour, but where all is pure, delicate, exquisite, I find it very hard to reconcile the words that you speak with that face. Ten years from now you will laugh over all this with me, perhaps, and say that it was a carefully-cherished girlish romance and folly. Come now, Angela, for charity's sake, smile, take my hand, and tell me that all this feverish talk has not been heartfelt."

But Angela would not touch his outstretched hand, nor would she smile; she shook her head, and her lips became compressed into a hard line.

"I am in earnest," she said. "But do not look so aggrieved. I will not fret you any more. Come, let us talk amicably together. Dolly is quite well; yesterday, I drove into Barport with Aunt Maria, and while she was ordering a box of 'Pour les ongles,' I slipped away to Drake's cottage,

and found Doll sitting on the steps reading a book about horses which—some one—had given her.” (Bertie knew by her tone that the unspeakable “some one” was Clemence.) “Do you know that she is nearly fourteen? I should not have thought her so old; why I was quite a woman at that age. She received me with a pleasant combination of fear and hatred; but she took the sovereign I gave her. I wish now that I had given her two. She looked rather pale, but she is perfectly recovered. I am very glad. Oh, never, never will I mount a horse again.”

“It is a pity that you should not ride, for you look uncommonly well on horseback,” he said, with a return to something like his old ease of manner.

“Do I?” she rejoined, bitterly. “Perhaps if I had not looked so well on that one horrible day, I should not have had so much to suffer.”

He bit his lips in vexation. To persistently return to the subject which it

seemed to him she should studiously avoid, came near to disgusting him with her; she seemed to so give the lie to her fair, feminine, willowy beauty and grace by her obstinate adherence to the unwomanly plan of thrusting forward her own concealable unwisdom and despicable weakness.

“You looked lovely enough to snare any man, certainly,” he said, trying to speak gently, and as befitted the injury-doer that he was.

She flushed with pleasure, and then he was sorry that he had so spoken.

“I will take your hand now, if you will give it to me,” she said, softly.

He held out his hand—rather awkwardly, it must be confessed—and she grasped it gently. The hand of her sister’s future husband. He was for ever lost to her! Oh, why had Fate dealt so hardly by her? And must she go on enduring the slow torture of watching the tender phases of betrothal wear them-

selves away into the culminating one of marriage? She had loved and prized herself so much, and had been so proud of her pride! Now she felt abundant sorrow and pity for herself, and homefelt wretchedness at seeing that pride laid low. Bertie's coldness struck a terrible blow at her vanity; for, thrown together as they had been—she and Bertie—none of the pretty details which fascinate a man more surely than aught else could escape him, and he had not been fascinated! Every shred of the individuality that she had always thought captivating had been placed plainly before him, and he had failed to be captivated! Was it possible that Clemence should gain, and she lose, by their juxtaposition?

Clemence, beside herself (Angela) seemed to her to be what a thick-lipped though useful flagon is beside a silver cinque-cento casket.

To all people purely and simply selfish, depreciation of others comes easy; and especially of those with whom they are more immediately thrown in contact. And



the grudge owed by them to one, who, they are obliged to admit, is their superior in person, in mind, in manner, is a righteous thing when compared with the astonished resentment which they cherish towards one who is an acknowledged inferior in natural and acquired graces, and yet manages to outshine and outgo them.

“Oh!” Angela breathed out, “I am miserable!”

“And do you suppose that I, too, am not miserable?”

“No,” she rejoined, quickly, “I suppose nothing of the sort. Why should you be miserable? I am not angry with you—no one is angry with you. I do not blame you in the least. You see I have so little to blame you for. I blame Clemence. Clemence has allowed me to play the humiliating part of a fantastic fool, and a happy dupe, before her, and has gloated over my exhibition of folly. She has been a warmed snake to me. Oh, I know so well what she has said to herself—so well! I know how she has been expanded with

triumph, and inflated with the pride of her advantage gained over me, who am younger than she—and—and—”

“Better looking,” supplied Bertie, speaking with calmness now, for it quieted him to hear his beloved one maligned; “better looking, cleverer, and all that sort of thing. But, Angela, it curdles my blood to hear you say that you hate your sister—your sister who loves you so fondly, and who, to save you from pain, would cut off——”

“Her eyelashes?” interrupted Angela, with a mocking laugh—“her only beauty?”

“Yes; even her beautiful eyelashes,” he returned, gravely. “She has not injured you, or been anything but loyal and loving to you. It is hard that she should be visited with the cold and silent resentment which you show to her when with her, and which she feels more deeply than if you had shown the most violent, short-lived rage. Pray do not offend my ears by wording your unjust and cruel anger against her to me, for, as you may fancy, it grates upon me abominably.”

"I despise myself," she cried passionately, "not for hating Clemence, for I do hate her, but for parading my sensations before you."

"It is a pretty severe way of punishing me," he rejoined quietly, and meeting her eyes unflinchingly. They seemed to him like the eyes of a haunting portrait that some gifted artist has painted to perpetuate an untold suffering. The pupil was dilated, the iris intensely blue and bright.

"Don't make me hate *you*," she whispered; "I have not yet; do not praise her to me——"

He struck in with a determined gentleness. "Let me see your sketch," he said, in much the same tone that one uses to a fractious child, "for you have your sketch-book with you, and I am sure have been making a sketch." He did not withdraw his eyes from hers as he spoke; on the contrary, he fixed them upon her more intently. He watched her colour rise, and fade away under that calm, yet masterful gaze; it seemed to him that he could catch the

throbs of her uncontrolled young heart, even, as her eyelids flickered for a moment, and then fell with an exhausted and sudden droop.

With a spiritless obedience, she opened that couvre-feu, her sketch-book, where the deplorable tree just scrawled showed woolly and feeble upon the tinted paper. He bent his head to examine it. Angela felt terrified at herself, such anger against her sister took possession of her. And she had said that she hated Clemence! Did she really hate her sister? The answer came in the shape of a sensation distinctive and terrible. It was a moment of moral cyclone; her left arm grew numb; her hands trembled so violently that the book fell from them to the ground.

Startled out of his hardly mustered calmness, Bertie stooped confusedly to pick it up. Angela felt something catch in the coarse yak lace with which her dress was trimmed—catch and pull with force; there was a flash and a report, and not swaying, or moaning, or gasping out any farewell



word to life, her companion fell heavily forward on six feet of the ground that it was written in the book of Fate, he was never to inherit.

The rooks went cawing home overhead.

## CHAPTER X.

“A WOUNDED NAME.”

**W**ITH his aunt hanging limp and senseless, and heavy as lead over his arm, and his wretched father crouching in a chair with his face buried in his hands, and Fox turning white and agitated as a delicate girl, Adrian felt that his accumulated misery had not reached its acme, for the sisters had not yet been told the terrible story which there was to tell. And on whom was that sad, that heart-rending duty to fall? He felt with an inward tremor that it must be on him.

Night was closing in fast; the young moon

had set, and the stars were coming. A shrouded *something* was being borne to a distant room through corridors and passages which only a few hours before had resounded with its quick and youthful tread. The shadow of a dark calamity stretched over the house; and upon it, and upon the faces of her stricken flesh and blood, the large eye of the late Mrs. Lawless languished, with the perpetual smile in it, that the painter had been at such pains to give.

A blow, the most unforeseen and incredible, had descended upon the old home, and the taint of the unrepentable sin had attached itself to the old name.

Now a light and rapid footstep is heard coming down the stairs, and with terror and bewilderment written on her face, Clemence hurriedly enters the room, with questioning words upon her lips that die away unspoken at sight of Adrian's face, and of Mr. Lawless's paralyzed horror, and Fox's livid lips.

"Clemence, oh, Clemence! how can I tell you all!" says Adrian in a suffocated

voice, and gently stretching his aunt upon a neighbouring sofa.

"Quickly!" Clemence gasps; "very quickly—tell me—or I shall——"

He does not allow her to finish. Laying his hands on her shoulders, he pushes her gently back into a chair, and puts a crushed scrap of paper into her hands.

She reads, and her face becomes as the face of the dead. She does not speak, or faint, or scream; she only stares at the torn oblong, which contains torture to her. Presently that awful look fades from her face, and is replaced by one of great and tender pity, and a suffering which embraces others beside herself.

"Angela!" she whispers. "Oh, miserable children, why did they not tell me! Oh, Bertie, Bertie!"

"Who is to tell Angela?" said Fox, wringing his hands.

There was a silence; Miss Lawless moaned from the sofa, Mr. Lawless staggered from the room like a drunken man; old Stainer, who had been outside the door



shedding an abundance of tears, went away downstairs to the aghast circle in the servants' hall; stealthy footfalls of strangers sounded in the hall. Horror and shame seemed tincturing the very atmosphere they breathed.

"Let us send for the vicar; he will tell her," said Adrian; "I cannot."

But Clemence did not hear him. Her noble face was white and vacant, her deep and loving eyes were blank and fixed. She was unconscious for a few merciful moments of her blighted future, and of her past, which should be a thing almost unendurable to recall.

Hastily summoned, the vicar entered the room in a short space of time, shaken out of his accustomed professional calm to the degree that it was only after one or two vain attempts that he was able to frame a sentence to Adrian.

"My cousin Angela has not yet been told," said Adrian, trying to achieve some sort of composure. "Will you tell her, sir?"

A look of surprise became mingled with the other expressions of horror, shock, and compassion upon the vicar's face; but he replied, "Certainly I will do so, if you wish it. Where is she?"

Miss Lawless's maid, who had been summoned to attend to her mistress, was directly sent upstairs to find Angela, and while she was gone, Adrian confided to the vicar that most deplorable feature of the case, which of course was to be kept as secret as it was possible.

The maid Parkins presently returned, saying that Miss Angela was in Miss Lawless's room. Thither the vicar was shown, and as he went, he fortified himself with inward prayer.

He found Angela seated by the window.

"Poor unconscious child!" thought he.

She had been gazing out, although darkness was closing in fast, and candles were burning upon the table. At the sound of the opening and shutting of the door, she turned her head, and rose to meet the

vicar with an air of expectancy and half dread on her fair girlish face.

“You wish to speak to me, Mr. North? Has anything happened? I fancied that Parkins was crying just now when she came to the door.”

“My child, I do wish to speak to you. I have been sent for to tell you——. Angela, something very heart-rending and terrible has taken place. It concerns you nearly. The consolations that I can give you, you will learn to take in time, I hope. Just now, I must only ask you to suffer and be brave.”

Angela clutched the arm of her chair, leaning forward with clayey nostrils and lips, and wild, terrified eyes that he dreamed of in after times. She seemed, by intuition, to gauge the depth of the wound which was to be inflicted on her.

“Angela,” he went on, “a short time ago—only two hours ago—your cousin Bertrand was discovered in the park—very much wounded.”

“What?” cried Angela.

"Poor child! poor child!" he murmured, taking her hand.

"He was dead!" she cried, in the same shrill, unnatural key as before.

"These women, these women, with their immediate perceptions!" thought the vicar. Then, aloud—

"He was dead. I feared to say the sad word to you, but you are self-told. He was shot through the brain. Strength, strength be yours, my poor child, to hear the rest. He died by his own hand. They found beside him a paper: can you bear to read what he had written on it?"

"Yes," she gasped; "give it me."

He gave to her what appeared to be the leaf of a note-book, hastily torn out. There were words written on it in a hand which, though wavering and uneven, was yet recognizable as her cousin Bertrand's.

The words were these:—

"Angela, I cannot go on living in the bondage of a promise that honour will not let me break—or keep.

"Good-bye. You will understand all."



Angela read, with a face livid and damp as that of an opium-eater ; and then, fixing her eyes upon the vicar's smoothly-shaven chin, said, with the intonation of an emotion too intense for tears—

“ He loved me, you see.”

The vicar was silent : what could he say ? That love was a thing to shudder at ; a terrible thing, which had enriched Hades, and had been a soul's loss, perhaps.

“ Does Clemence know ? ” Angela went on, speaking as if her lips were frozen.

“ Yes.”

“ Has it been a shock to her ? ”

“ She is stupefied with grief and horror.”

A little pause came. The evening wind passed across the candles ; the pointed flames, as they blew horizontally, seemed pointing straight at Angela. The rustling of the ivy-leaves clinging to the gray stones outside, penetrated to where they sat—the vicar and Angela.

“ Wake me ! ” she cried, in sudden, sharp accents. “ It is not true—it is not real—it is not too late ! It is a frightful dream

—I have not——! Wake me! wake me!  
and for the love of Heaven take *that*  
away!”

She pointed at the strip of paper lying  
on the floor, shuddering away from it as  
she spoke.

He stooped, and picking it up, laid it  
down on the table behind him.

“Never let me see it again,” she went  
on, frantically, “it would bring madness to  
me. Oh, this is not a dream; in dreams  
the torture does not last so long—one  
wakes or dies.”

She uttered a faint cry, and twisting her  
hands together at the back of her neck,  
rose to her feet and fled from the room.

The vicar drew a deep breath. She  
knew; she had been told; it was over; he  
could go back now to something approach-  
ing his every-day sensations.

He went downstairs, and walking softly  
through the house, entered that distant  
room where Bertie lay. The familiar  
young face looked very calm and still; no  
pain nor evil were written on those quiet

features, nor any look of inward strife, nor the self-horror that sometimes comes in that last, unspeakable half second. The vicar gazed at him attentively. Was it possible that this was a deserter and traitor in the battle of life? The good man took off his spectacles and wiped them, for they were dim.

He had seen this young fellow grow up from childhood by the side of his own boy; he had watched the development of what appeared to be a kindly, frank, and generous nature; he had seen a natural, healthy, manly love of life grow and ripen. Now Bertrand Lawless seemed to have given the lie to himself.

Mr. North was ever prepared to see human nature taking on forms of unexpected, unaccountable evil, but for *this* he had not been prepared; it was something that he would have said could never come within the remotest bounds of possibility. He gave one last, miserable, half-bewildered look at the long-known clay, with its look of supremacy over its old self, its grand

look of peace and achievement, and turned heavy-hearted away. How dared this poor young sinner look as though he found death gain ?

“ I have told your cousin,” he said briefly to Adrian, whom he encountered in the entrance-hall. “ Your brother could not have been himself,” he went on, “ he was not accountable. He looks like one who has conquered life now ; he is beautiful, grand, he is *himself*. They will return a verdict of unsound mind, of course. No, no, he was not himself—*then*. I believe that he is safe now ; I believe that it is well with him. I could not look on the majestic innocence of his face and think otherwise. By me he will always be remembered with the same affection and admiration that he has gained from me since his bright and generous boyhood. God bless you all, Adrian. I shall come to-morrow again. Good-night.”

There was little sleep in that afflicted house that night. No one saw Angela ; she was locked in her room, and her room



was perfectly still. Clemence, too, was alone in her room wrestling with her great unhappiness, but her door was not locked.

As the gray dawn stole like a thief upon the quiet world, she rose up shivering from her sleepless bed, and hastily muffling herself in a dressing-gown, walked to the door ; a longing possessed her to look upon the face of her unhappy lover and cousin for the last time, to say to the unresponsive dust, " Good-bye, friend ; why did you not trust me more ? "

She opened the door, and went softly out. Cold, pearly light came in at the window on the landing. The marble figures on either side seemed to freeze in it. The leaves of the climbing rose-bush outside were shivering and trembling in the cold morning wind ; the loose window-sash shook and rattled, but timidly ; the noise was hardly perceptible.

The carpet and old oak railing looked older far than in ordinary lights, just as a withered woman does, when seen by the gray dawn-light. One stair creaked a

little ; if it had been midnight it would have creaked far louder. The hall was almost dark ; the antlers and deers' heads looked dim and shadowy in the morning twilight, so did the great old chairs, and the old fire-arms and spears hanging on the wall. Clemence crossed the hall, going through a long passage, very dark and unfamiliar, to that distant room which was her goal.

The watcher was sleeping as calmly as a child. The pure, passionless light came into the room, concentrated through the upper part of the window, which was quite uncovered ; the lower part was shuttered. The light fell upon Bertie, and Clemence, with a strained, oppressed feeling about her throat and heart, clasped her hands tightly together over her breast, and looked at him.

Was it possible that he had been such an impostor ; that he had been guilty of such strange duplicity and double dealing ; that he had been so unstable, and so thorough a craven ?

If the frozen lips with their wonderful smile, although mute, had any power still to answer, they said "No." The whole noble face which could only plead for itself by its dumb, dead beauty and peace now, said "No."

Clemence's surcharged heart relieved itself by repressed sobs. There must be some frightful mistake ; he could not look like *that*, and yet have been so cowardly, so have sinned against himself and heaven. The mute lips seemed to smile away the charge, the honest, fair brow to deny it.

"Do you forgive him ?" said a low voice in her ear.

She turned with a great start, and found that her sister was standing beside her, completely dressed, but with loose, rough hair.

"With my whole heart. Oh, if he could only come back and trust me ! Why did he not trust me ? I do pity him, and you too, my poor Angela. We are all three to be pitied, but it seems to me that you are most to be pitied of all."

A change came over Angela's wild white face ; she let herself sink upon the ground, and hid her face in her sister's gown.

“ Pity me !” she whispered, brokenly. “ Touch me ; be kind to me ; say that nothing shall ever make you hate me ; say it, Clemence.”

“ *Hate* you ?” repeated Clemence, “ hate you, my only and darling sister ? You should not even say the word ; you know I could never do anything but love you.”

“ But *this* has been owing to me,” stammered Angela.

“ It has not been your fault, it has been your misfortune. Get up, my own dear ; come away. Kiss his forehead for good-bye—*I* have no right—and come away.”

But Angela shuddered.

“ No, I think he would rise, come to life, accuse me, curse me. Let us go together. I did not want to come down here, Clemence ; something made me come ; but I am not sorry now ; I found *you* ; I did not expect that. I do not know what I might—what I should—have done, if I



had not found *you*, and found you Clemence, kind Clemence."

Poor suffering child, thought Clemence. She half led, half supported her sister to her room, and threw herself down on the bed beside her, laying her cold cheek against Angela's icy one, and they were silent; but only for a few minutes; then Angela started violently up.

"I cannot let you be so kind to me!" she cried. "It is horrible—you do not realize it all. We must be apart; I cannot live with you and see your great, gentle gray eyes, that are so like *his* eyes, fixed upon me with no reproach, no ill-will, no resentment——"

"Angela, had I not enough without this?"

But Angela turned away, and struggled in her sister's tender hold; she got upon her feet, made one step forward, and fell headlong to the ground.

The gray light was tinged now with faint rose-colour, and entering the uncurtained window, fell upon the sisters. It only caught

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Angela's fair, disordered hair, as she lay face downwards on the floor, but it bathed Clemence's face in purest, loveliest light, as she bent to raise her sister.

Strange bars and scrolls of rose-colour lay upon the wall ; the birds awaking, began to sing exultantly ; another day was given to them, and they had so few, little, light-hearted things. The stir and hum of life came faintly upon the air. Life was life still, only to the sisters it was painted now in dark and sombre colours, had fallen to the saddest minor key, as airs in music fall from notes which set the pulses leaping gladly, to notes that jar the heart-strings, and bring the tears that a moment ago seemed very far away.

The rosy sunlight was a joyous thing in colour, the birds' voices joyous sounds for any one seeing and listening with a happy heart. To Clemence, there were never things that seemed so sad as they. The sunlight danced and flickered, the birds sang clearer and more gaily ; they were antagonistic to suffering and death and

sorrow ; they had no sympathy to give to the girl with the wounded heart kneeling there in the radiant light, with her sister in her arms.

Clemence lifted Angela, and looking into her face, saw that she had fainted. As she hastily crossed the room to ring the bell for assistance, a vague wonderment came to her, as to why her brain did not crack, or her heart break.

“ But you must be brave,” said the inner voice.  “ It is possible to bear everything ; hearts and brains are made of tougher calibre than to break at the first weight of sorrow. It is cowardly to slink into mad melancholy or miserable ill-health. Be strong, and endure well to the end. Snatch the crown from off the thorns of life.”

## CHAPTER XI.

“ All are sleeping, weary heart !  
Thou, thou only sleepless art !  
All this throbbing, all this aching,  
Evermore shall keep thee waking,  
For a heart in sorrow breaking  
Thinketh ever of its smart !”



ANGELA, through the beneficent medium of a nervous fever, escaped from herself. For four weary weeks she lay ill—not dangerously perhaps, but certainly seriously. She was ill enough to look more like a foam-wraith than a mortal maiden, when at last she was permitted to sit up, supported by pillows, at the open window, and breathe the sunshiny October air.



“You should not hang over me, and wait upon me, and slave for me like this,” she said, with feeble petulance, to Clemence, who was arranging a shawl about her shoulders. “It is unnatural; you ought to feel sometimes what I am—the destroyer of your happiness!”

“We suffer together,” said Clemence, simply; “perhaps that is why I forget it. Besides, as I told you once before, it was your misfortune, not your fault.”

“Have it so, then.”

“Angela, I know that you cannot want me to think that you were at fault, in the least degree.”

“I do not know what I want to think; I have not anything to think with now, it seems to me. My head feels as weak as my wrists feel—I cannot lift that book, see. Tell me, Clemence, what was—was the—verdict?”

“Unsound mind,” replied Clemence, briefly, and turning very pale.

“And that paper? Does any one know——?”

“ I fear through Aunt Maria’s Parkin it has got abroad ; not to any great extent, however.”

A strange look crossed Angela’s face ; she hid it at once, by pressing her thin hands over her eyes. When she took her hands away, it was to say,

“ I am glad that I did not have to go down—

“ ‘ The dark<sup>d</sup> stair,  
Which windeth I cannot tell where.’ ”

“ Don’t speak of anything so terrible, dear.”

“ I must get away from here,” said Angela, with tremulous eagerness ; “ away from this place. Don’t you think that, looking so thin and spectral as I do, if I were to kneel down at Aunt Maria’s feet and beg her to take me away, she would do it ? ”

“ I am sure, if you tell Mr. Cassells, it will be quite sufficient ; for he will order you to go, and Aunt Maria never disobeys doctor’s orders.”

“How sensible you are still! Why, you must be made of granite, so to bear that—shock!”

“I have stood it—yes,” said Clemence, sadly. “But look at my hands, look at my face; I have grown old and thin, and miserably plain. Don’t think that I mind, Angela; my face was never my fortune, you know.”

“Just the same,” said Angela, nodding her head feebly up and down; “proverbs and all! Thinner—yes, she is thinner, and gray-white to the lips; but *Clemence* just the same. I am no longer Angela; I am changed, body and spirit, for ever! Have you been to church since?”

“Once—last Sunday.”

“Did not every eye turn upon you in pitying curiosity?”

“Indeed, I did not notice. Oh! if Bertie had only trusted me, I would have freed him so willingly; and neither heart nor pride should have broken. You, I know, had no power to trust to me; for I am certain that he was too delicately honourable ever

to hint at love to you while he was engaged to me."

A faint colour came into Angela's face ; but what wild heart-throbs it took to send it there, faint as it was ! After an instant's pause, she said, " He was very honourable." The words fell low and grudgingly.

" The soul of honour," said Clemence, earnestly.

Angela fixed her great blue eyes upon her sister.

" I do not admire it all in you," she said, almost fiercely. " You are poor spirited, or else——" The two last words seemed spoken without her volition, and she paused abruptly. " Go, get A. L." she went on quickly, and turning her face away. " Don't come back yourself ; send A. L. and Fox both, but don't come yourself. I want you to go and get some fresh air. Do go, and come back with some of the red in your lips that you used to have. Take a long walk ; pray do."

Clemence looked in perplexity at her.



"Very well," she answered, wishing to humour her, and obediently went away.

Adrian and Fox came up at once to see the invalid, and Aunt Maria came also.

They all looked like invalids themselves. Adrian's bronzed skin had changed to olive, his dark eyes were heavy and blood-shot, and about his hair and clothes lurked that carelessness which is eloquent of unhappiness. Fox had become almost attenuated, his curling upper-lip drooped, and his white teeth were never visible. Poor Miss Lawless looked as if her gastric juice had indeed been playing her mischievous tricks.

She kissed Angela kindly, heaving a sigh that made the whalebones in her dress creak.

"I have made Clemence go for a walk," Angela said, languidly. "She is so pale; she looks almost as ill as I do. Have I only been ill four weeks? It seems like four months, or four years. Is it only four weeks since I saw you all? I have lived countless years of misery since then. Strange, haunted hours, I have had in my

fever. I have seen *him* over and over again. Not as he looked in life—ah, no! One terrible night, I saw a hundred hands in the air; they all pointed at me; they all wore *his* ring—the blood-stone ring with the crest on it, that he always wore on his left hand. That was a terrible night! But it was delirium; it was not such conscious misery as if I had been well. Now I am so weak——”

“Poor Bertie!” said Adrian, biting his lips to hide their trembling. I cannot believe it all now. It was like being struck by lightning while standing in the sunshine under a cloudless sky. Bertie, who had gone out singing, with his gun over his shoulder, only a few hours before! I cannot reconcile my reason to it all.”

“‘He loved the name of honour more than he feared death,’” murmured Angela, quoting, with ashy lips.

Adrian made an impatient movement. “All my old ideas of Bertie, and my lifelong knowledge of Bertie, are at variance with this deed of Bertie’s,” he answered,

lingering over the familiar name with most sad gentleness of tone.

Angela clasped her hands together under her chin, and studiously avoiding looking into his face, which had grown pale with emotion, gazed out upon the old trees, about which the coarse-voiced rooks were wheeling. The air seemed topaz-tinted; the heat of August and September was gone, and crisp mornings and evenings, and breezy middays had come now to take its place.

“Look at them!” said Angela, pointing at the rooks. “Why did he not fire his gun at *them*? I hate the sight and sound of them, the croaking birds of ill-omen, with their black feathers. Dear Aunt Maria, dear, *dear* Aunt Maria, take me away! Take me to some unfamiliar place. Take me away from these murmuring trees, and these black birds with their scolding voices.”

Miss Maria looked at her with real compassion.

“We will see what the doctor says,

dear," she replied ; " but for the present, of course, we must stay at home here, never going outside the park-gates, except to church."

" The park !" repeated Angela, with a sort of wail in her voice. " You would not say the word if you knew what a knell it is to me."

" Poor child !" said Adrian, pityingly.

" All the pity seems to come to me," said Angela. " Clemence is more to be pitied than I am."

No one replied ; for at that moment the doctor came to make his daily visit, and Fox and Adrian went downstairs.

Upon talking for twenty minutes with Angela, Mr. Cassells peremptorily ordered change of air and scene in the course of a month or so. " Entire change of air and scene," he said to Miss Lawless ; " the continent—say Nice, Mentone, Paris, Cannes, Sorrento." Mr. Cassells knew that he was speaking to people of means, and was therefore broad in his suggestions.

" For health's sake I will, of course,



make any sacrifice," said Miss Lawless, sighing, and unscrewing her smelling-bottle.

"I think I shall die, if I have to stay here," murmured Angela, with a grateful look up at her physician.

Mr. Lawless, who, since the blow that we wot of, had been almost invisible to any mortal eyes, came up that evening shortly before dinner, to visit his niece.

Upon first seeing him enter the room, Angela had determined to speak to him about leaving that sad spot, Creyke, and of wintering somewhere where there should be no painful associations; where sights, and sounds, and skies, and faces—all, all should be new; but when that sunken visage, with its weary old eyes and harsh lineaments confronted her, her heart failed her, her courage oozed quite away, and she felt that she must leave the subject to be broached by her aunt, or perhaps Mr. Cassells.

"Better, thank you," she faltered, in reply to his question of how she was feel-

ing. Then the large scalding tears gathered in her eyes, and soaked her long brown eyelashes. It was a very painful moment; but neither put into words the terrible significance of thoughts and looks. Each knew what the other was thinking of, yet neither spoke. It was best so.

“You have had a weary time; yes, it has been a weary time for all of us—a black time. I am aged and stricken by it; I am beaten down into the dust. I came up and looked at you once, my child, in the midst of your illness. You did not see me; that was forbidden. You were tossing and muttering in fever. What a house it has been in these four weeks. The Juggernaut of trouble has been passing its ruthless weight over us. Clemence has done her best for us all; she has merged her own trouble—which perhaps is deepest of all—into sympathy and aid for us. She is a good girl, Clemence. I never wanted it much; but would to God I could have it now.” (He was not lucid, but Angela knew well what he meant.) “Clemence is

above rubies. She would save a poor man from being reduced to pauperism, I believe; yet she would find no pleasure in squandering the substance of a rich one."

"She is very kind," said Angela, faintly, "and very strong, mentally, morally, and physically."

"Good! Good for herself, good for those by whom she is surrounded. She would have done well for—every one. Oh, life, life! A part of the house had now better be closed, and some of these useless servants sent away. We must mourn, mourn, mourn! We have had an overwhelming affliction; we must put on sackcloth and ashes; not for *our own* sins—no. Angela, my dear, am I tiring you?"

"No," said Angela, in that weak, wailing voice in which she had spoken before. "I cannot bear to be alone; I grow numb with horror and dismay. If I only need not *think!* Cannot you see how I must blame myself? And you—you, in your heart, must feel that I am the cause—the most unhappy cause. Every one in their hearts



must say with a shudder, ‘She was the cause.’ ”

Mr. Lawless was silent.

“No!” Angela went on, raising herself, looking him in the eyes, and speaking forcibly. “It was Fate; it should not be visited on me. It is not; you are all too kind to me. Do you think we shall ever be like our old selves again?”

“Everything is lived down,” answered Mr. Lawless, letting his head sink upon his breast; “everything, everything. It is a merciful dispensation; we outlive everything. We must trust to time, poor Angela; that is all the consolation I can give to you, or to myself. There is healing in the falling sands of Time’s hour-glass—and in his scythe sometimes.”

Angela looked at her uncle in profound surprise. She had fancied that he would refuse to see her; that he would hate and blame her, esteeming her the cause of that catastrophe which had fallen upon them. What unsuspected moral strata people had! He had no rancorous nor unkind feeling



towards her—this grim old man, who had always seemed so harsh and so intolerant. He laid no incubus of unspoken resentment upon her. He refrained from suffocating her with those words—implied or outspoken —“It is your fault.” Words teeming with disheartenment, pain, and self-condemnation. And he had seemed to her a masterpiece of crabbed, gnarled, rough, and prickly human nature!

“You are too good!” she murmured, hiding her face in her hands.

“No, no,” he answered, hastily, and getting up, fearing a scene. “You are over-fatiguing yourself by talking. I will go now, I think. I hear Jane coming with your dinner, or tea—I hear a rattle of china outside.”

“I dare say it is Clemence,” she said, looking up; “she often brings things up to me.”

It was Clemence, looking more like her old self than she had done for many a long day. In her hands she held a little tray, which she placed on the table by her sister.

After exchanging a few words with her, Mr. Lawless went downstairs.

“Has uncle Francis been here long?” asked Clemence.

“No, only a very few minutes. Clemence, tell me: do not you think that he would have felt very nearly as wretched if *he* had died, or had been accidentally killed?”

“Oh, no,” answered Clemence, emphatically; “oh, no, no, no!”

Angela, who had begun to taste her beef-tea, now dropped the spoon into the little Wedgwood bowl, and leaned wearily back in her chair.

“I cannot eat,” she said, in a stifled voice; “I am *sick, sick* at heart. I feel almost willing at this moment to be lying in the cold and lonely grave.”

“Oh, try and eat your broth,” rejoined Clemence, entreatingly; “pray do. Or if you cannot eat that, let me send down for a glass of new milk for you.”

“I want nothing,” said Angela, “except reprieve from torturing memories, and that

I shall never find. Oh, pray shut the window! The trees are beginning to murmur, and the rooks are sailing past in flocks, telling one another ghostly stories with those goblin voices of theirs. Make haste—shut it quickly.”

Clemence did as she was desired, and returned to her sister’s side.

“Clemence,” said Angela, looking at her beseechingly, “cannot you make Aunt Maria ask Uncle Lawless to-night about going away? So that before I sleep I may be able to know that it is settled. Promise that you will do your best to make her?”

“I will do my very best,” answered Clemence; and on this, Jane, a neat little maid who had attended to Angela during her illness, came to assist the invalid to her room, and Clemence went to her own room, and then down to dinner.

Thanks to her, the proposition was laid before Mr. Lawless that night, and he was brought to consent to it.

It was then definitely arranged, that

while he and Fox stayed at home, the rest of them should go abroad in search of the total change of air and scene requisite for Angela. Now, the question arose of where they were to pitch their tent. Miss Maria waggled her head slowly backwards and forwards with a combination of intense melancholy and complete indifference, and was silent.

Clemence bravely tried to make some decision, but broke down, bursting into bitter tears.

"Oh, go to Paris," said Fox, with the fretfulness of unhappiness. "Does Angela care where she goes, so long as she gets away? I suppose not?"

Clemence shook her head.

"Then go to Paris; it is the most accessible place, unless you stop at Calais, and then you will avoid all that melancholy crowd of invalids, which you would be sure to encounter in places like Mentone, or Nice, and which would inevitably depress Angela."

"We might certainly go to Paris, and



stay there while we make further plans," said Adrian. "Do you approve, Aunt Maria, and Clemence?"

Miss Lawless made no opposition, and Clemence listlessly coincided.

Hence it was that Clemence was able to tell her sister before she slept, that her uncle had given his assent to their going, although he would not go with them. It was possible, however, that he and Fox might join them later on. So Angela took whatever consolation there was to be gained from the knowledge that, ere long, she would leave the spot rendered hateful to her by the mental agony she had endured in it, and horrible beyond words by the tragedy that had been enacted there.

"They said Paris—I don't know why," said Clemence. "The very effort of choosing seems beyond our powers now. All places are the same to me. It does not matter to me where I go; nor to you, I suppose?"

"No," answered Angela; "I do not care,

so that we get away from here. Clemence, tell me"—this not suddenly, but only as if she were continuing her train of thought aloud—"who found him?"

"Dorothy Drake," said Clemence. "Hush, Angela! do not talk any more to-night." She bent down as she spoke, and kissed her sister for good night, going herself to a small dressing-room adjoining, where since her sister's illness she had slept. The door was left open, and Angela, whether sleeping or waking, was perfectly still.

Clemence hoped that her sister slept; for herself, she lay awake long, very long, thinking out the saddest thoughts that any mind can hold when the conscience is "undegraded by intruding sins."

In the next room the night-light burned; all was quiet; the grave, soul-searching night hours dragged on.

Clemence's life was now a life smirched with a Past. Only a little while ago—such a little, little while—it had stretched fair and calm behind her, with a golden refrac-

tion, perhaps, from the happy present. It was all changed now. That night was only one of many that she had spent, and should still spend. Perhaps none seemed so long and terrible as this. One by one she heard the hours proclaim themselves in the silvery tinkle of the tiny clock on the mantelpiece, until the morning wind sprung up and—

“Rocked the full-foliaged elms, and swung  
The heavy-folded rose, and flung  
The lilies to and fro, and said,  
‘The dawn, the dawn!’” . . . .

Then, at last, Clemence fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ But oft in the low west, the day,  
Smouldering, sent up a sullen flame  
Along the dreary waste of gray,  
As tho’ in that red region lay,  
Heap’d up, like autumn weeds and flowers,  
For fire, its thorny, fruitless hours,  
And God said, ‘ Burn it all away ! ’ ”

**D**AYS and weeks slipped into the past. Autumn laid “ a fiery finger on the leaves ; ” frosts nipped the tarrying flowers, and chilled the little brave-hearted birds, and drove the dormouse into his warm winter’s sleep, and gave a time of triumph to the cricket on his warm hearth-stone over the improvident grasshopper perishing in the cold outside. Occasionally a warm and sunshiny



day came, only to make the others seem colder and more cheerless by contrast. The wind rushed up cold and damp and salt from the sea. Fox's fox-terrier, Skip, shivered, with plaintive eyes, from morning till night, and seemed always mutely imploring for warm corners, or cushioned chairs, or sheltering folds of a dress.

Angela, although it was ten weeks since her illness began, dwined and drooped still, and was to be seen creeping about the rooms, or going from one room to another, supporting herself by the furniture as she walked.

There never was a more piteous face than hers. She seemed to be looking out terrified, on life, for the first time. She looked as if she were always fearing to be gazed on by the Evil-eye, and possessed no charm against it, as if she were wandering in some dark moral labyrinth to which she had lost the clue. Sometimes she would hold her fragile right hand against the candle close, and closer, until the delicate down would be burnt, and the white skin

crimsoned; and she would look at it as though saying inwardly, "Perish!"

It was decided that the time had now come for them to go. First to Paris; then, if they chose to do so, on to Nice or Cannes. Preparations began to be made. Parkin grew bustling and loquacious again (she had been like a pullet in the rain for the last ten weeks); and, taking off the list shoes in which she had been gliding, put on the pair, one of which creaked.

Boxes were brought down; the house that had been more deadly still than any bewitched princess's sleeping palace, awoke, and the overhanging gloom—what a gloom it had been!—became, in a small degree, dissipated.

Down in the great majolica bowl in the hall, lay many cards which had been left by the folk round about. There had never been one creature admitted, not even Mrs. North.

They were mourning, not a sorrow only, but a sin, Mr. Lawless said. Now that keen edge of misery, which had been sharp

as any scimitar, was beginning to be in a measure blunted. The sorrow which had been such a ghoul-like intruder at first, established itself among them; and as the most shuddering hand will in time become familiarized with handling a snake, so the mind accustoms itself to the indwelling of detested, ugly, and obnoxious facts.

The Lawlesses began to hold up their heads again somewhat.

Clemence now busied herself without intermission for herself and her sister, principally for the latter.

Angela, with a strange determination, insisted on wearing much deeper mourning than either Clemence or Miss Lawless. It was allowed to be so; for that she had that most melancholy "best right" could not be disallowed. How Clemence's heart bled afresh at this reminder of the difference between their griefs, no one knew. But Angela knew that one morning Clemence slipped a ruby ring upon her thin finger, whispering, "Keep it; keep it always; I have no right to wear it now."

Angela, turning white, hesitated, and then hastily drawing it off, gave it back to her sister, saying, "No, no, he gave it to you ; I will not have it."

But as Clemence was about to take it away and lock it up, she had snatched it back, and looking at it with a strange, a terrible, expression in her large eyes, replaced it on her finger. "How can I do it?" she muttered. Yet she kept the ring, not wearing it, but hoarding it away.

One moist, gray, thoroughly English day, they left Creyke.

Clemence clung to her uncle, weeping, as she said good-bye to him. Her suffering had made her heart very tender towards every one.

"You and Fox will come and join us," she said ; "now promise, Uncle Francis."

He gave a sort of promise, and kissed her with all the tenderness that in him lay.

Angela said farewell to him with tearless eyes ; she tried to speak, but words failed her.

They drove through the lodge-gates in



silence ; leaving the present owner, and that poor young owner that was to have been, behind. *Was* to have been, in the very most past tense of the word.

The sisters avoided one another's glance as they sat on opposite sides of the carriage. Clemence lifted her guileless, sad, gray eyes to the great trees standing like sentinels on the edge of the road ; Angela, shuddering, fixed hers on her own clasped, black-gloved hands.

They were obliged to stay all night in London, on account of Angela's still delicate health, which could not bear the strain of the unbroken journey. Adrian took them to the hotel where Henry North's uncle was still abiding with his sluggish liver, and his tendency to apoplexy. Adrian had no idea that Henry himself was there, and they all started at encountering him in the hall. Adrian was not sorry thus to fall on him ; the meeting there, in that unexpected manner, and unfamiliar place, was less painful than it otherwise would have been. Angela, with

her heavy crape veil down, shook hands in silence, and hurried on ; but Clemence had her veil thrown aside, and as she paused for an instant, Henry was shocked to see the change that trouble had made in her once glowing and radiant face.

He was almost glad that he had not been able to see Angela's. If this sister was so much altered, what would the other, frailer one, be ?

The women went on, and were shown to their rooms ; Adrian lingered with Henry.

"We are on our way to the Continent," he said. "We go first to Paris, and whither next, I know not ; that is left for Angela to decide."

"Adie," said Henry, abruptly, "I can't speak about what is in my heart ; I must let it go unsaid ; I am sure that you will understand how it is. I cannot put it into words." His eyes strayed unconsciously to the hat he held in his hands, and Adrian noticed that he had upon it a strip of crape for the friend of his youth.

Adrian turned his head aside for an instant.

"Why will you not come up this evening?" he said, resuming something of his calm manner, and looking Henry in the face again. "Angela may not see you, but the others will, I think."

Henry looked disappointed, but he answered,

"Yes, I will certainly come; and they can see me or not, as they prefer. I am up here again with my uncle. Poor old fellow! I am afraid he is breaking up fast. It is a pity that he has not a wife, or daughters, or something, to look after him; he is awfully cranky, he will not let my mother come near him; in fact, the only people he is willing to have about him are myself and his man. Good-bye for the present, Lawless; I suppose you want to dine, and I'm detaining you."

They separated. Henry North went out, and Adrian upstairs.

Henry had had a very sore heart himself, for the last three months. He feared that

Angela was lost to him; for he fancied now, as did nearly every one else who knew her well, that she had loved her cousin.

Perhaps she might one day give him the re-illuminated ashes of love; but never now, he feared, the radiant flame of girlhood's first passion.

He struck the kerb-stone savagely with his stick as he walked along (he was going to dine with a friend at the friend's club), and as thinking of Angela was only tribulation to him now, he tried to turn his thoughts elsewhere. But nevertheless they would stray back either to her, or to his poor friend who had enacted such a sinister tragedy. He could not help arranging in his mind to leave early enough to visit the Lawlesses that night, even if only for a few minutes. They were to go away at seven the next morning, and he must grasp his opportunity of seeing Angela once again.

It was about a quarter to ten, when, on returning to the hotel, he sent up his card,



and he determined to stay just a quarter of an hour, and no more.

As he entered the room, he felt quite irritated that that usually calm heart of his beat so wildly, and that he could not refrain from biting and gnawing his red moustache, in something very nearly allied to agitation.

There were three black figures in the room, he saw at a glance ; Angela, then, had not been averse to seeing him. For this, much thanks. There was a perceptible tremor in her voice and hand, as she shook hands, and murmured faintly some word of greeting.

‘ You are on your way to Paris ? ’ he said, seating himself.

“ Yes,” answered Aunt Maria, who by this time looked much as she had done for the last ten years ; “ the doctor gave stringent orders that Angela should go where she would have entire change of air and scene, and I felt it my duty to take her away.”

Henry murmured something which might have been anything, and his vagrant glance

passed over her and Clemence, and rested upon Angela. What was it that the younger sister's face had lost, and the older one's gained, since he saw them last?

Clemence looked nourished by her sorrow, as upon angels' food, while Angela looked like one who had gone famishing on poisons.

There was a pause, and then Henry, thinking that perhaps the best topic for discussion would be his uncle, commenced :

" My uncle—I am here with my uncle—is an ample testimony of the climate of the Mauritius. I think he said he once had the pleasure of knowing you, Miss Lawless."

" Yes," answered Aunt Maria, " I knew him slightly before he left England, some—oh dear—some fifteen years ago. A man in the most enviably robust health he appeared to be then."

" If you could see him now !" said Henry. " There is not one small vestige left of that enviable health of which you speak."

“What doctor has he?” inquired Miss Lawless.

Henry named his physician. “But my uncle is not in the least amenable to doctors’ orders, unfortunately,” he added, “and garnishes his invalid’s dishes, which he is told to eat, with strange zests and sauces, such as I am sure Dr. Melwin would strongly disapprove of.”

“Are you still at Aldershot, Captain North?” asked Clemence.

“No; I am at Woolwich now; a great benefit to me, as I wish to be constantly in town. I have not been at home for some time,” he added; “and I dread unspeakably to go there.”

He spoke in a voice full of feeling, and all three women looked touched.

“I am most thankful to come away,” faltered Angela, speaking for the first time.

“I hope you will have a good passage across,” said Henry. “Do you go from Folkestone or Dover?”

“From Folkestone,” answered Miss Maria.

Thus conversation went halting on, until Henry, glancing at the clock, saw that he had stayed, not a quarter, but half an hour. He rose to go.

"A fellow wants me to spend part of my long leave in Paris, and I may possibly do so," he said, looking searchingly at Angela, that he might see how this intelligence was taken.

"Oh," said Angela, with thorough indifference. He experienced an inner chill.

"I hope that we shall not be gone," she added, much to his satisfaction, although the words were uttered in the same indifferent tone.

"I hope not, I am sure," he said, earnestly. "I shall get your address from Adie. It was very kind of you to see me to-night. I hope that I have not kept you up."

"Oh, no ; it is still very early," said Clemence. Angela did not speak again. He carried a picture away with him of a gaudy hotel room, full of bric-à-brac, and stuffed birds, and old china, and brilliant objects of



upholstery, and rubbish ; and against this gaudiness, the figure of his love, in her black dress, and with her pathetic white face turned towards him, while the haunted blue eyes, with their introspective gaze, were turned away from him.

The next morning saw our travellers on their way to Folkestone in the tidal train.

Arrived at the pier, the three ladies went directly on board the packet, while Parkin and Adrian waited to see about the luggage. The boat was very full. There was the American maiden always en evidence, with a modest mother shrinking in the background ; there was the overpowering British matron, with a shy and overpowered daughter or two under her wing ; there were Frenchmen in queer caps and fur collars, reading the “ *Revue des Deux Mondes* ;” Englishmen, in coats down to their heels, and with a conspicuous air of seeing nobody, and desiring to see nobody, and of waiting for the boat to be off.

Everything of female kind was making a closely practical application of the saying,

“Self is the first object of charity,” by pushing and striving for a seat under the shelter of the blue and white awnings. Angela got one of these, of course; she always did get sheltered places, and good places everywhere; and Miss Maria, by the power of the eye—in her case, the dog-fish eye—frightened out of the seat next a small and timid-looking girl of about eleven.

“Don’t let me deprive you of your seat,” said Miss Lawless, with perfect, iced civility.

“I—I’m going down to mamma,” faltered the child; and thereupon Miss Lawless subsided into the vacant place, while Clemence walked a little forward, and waited for Adrian. When he came, they found places together somewhere on the side, and simultaneously gazed up with suspicion at the fast-driving clouds and racing smoke. Bah! how nasty it all was in half an hour!

“Go!” said Angela, to Adrian, as he bent with solicitude over her; “for Heaven’s sake, go, and leave me alone!”

"But I am afraid that you are going to faint," he answered, and forced her to drink some brandy.

"Now go," she said, in a firmer voice, and pushing him away.

He went, feeling that there are more touching spectacles in the world than a sea-sick girl.

At Amiens they paused again, and spent the night, Angela seeming so weary and exhausted.

"There are some things here to see," said Adrian, that night, after dinner, leaning his elbows on the table, yawning, and speaking in the manner of a man who would imply, "Let those people see them who choose."

"La Belle Gabrielle was born here," observed Clemence, speaking in the same interestless tone as his own.

"Would you not like to see the cathedral to-morrow morning?" asked Adrian; "we shall have time before we start."

Angela shook her head; Clemence said, doubtfully, "Perhaps." But when the

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morning came she did not go, and they entered their railway carriage, with its fog-coloured lining, having only the mistiest possible notion of Amiens.

END OF VOL. II.





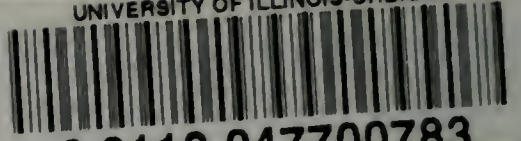








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